

# SPIRIT AND COURAGE

**STORIES  
ABOUT  
SOVIET  
YOUTH**

This is a book about our contemporaries. The heroes of the stories are called by their real names, many of them are living among us; they have their work, their joys and their worries. None of the stories are fictitious, and if the destinies of some of the heroes have indeed become legend it was life itself that had shaped them so. The unparalleled heroism of the Young Guard, an underground youth organisation in Krasnodon, will, like a legend, be handed down the generations. Certain moments in the life and struggle of the Young Guard, not known before, are described in this book.

The stories collected in this volume are simply told, there are no mysteries or secrets behind them. One secret is revealed, however—the secret of Soviet education that has produced people capable of building the first artificial earth satellite in history and launching the first man-made planet.

The reader will learn about the achievements of young scientists, will accompany parties of young geologists on their trek through the taiga in search of diamonds, and will thrill to the heroism of the young soldiers who disposed of a German ammunition dump in Kursk. The reader will meet the members of a tractor team working on the virgin lands, the members of the first Communist Work Team, and more of the young Soviet people who are enthusiastically carrying out the Seven-Year Plan.

The book is not finished. It is up to the young people to whom it is dedicated to add more pages to it.

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ABOUT  
SOVIET  
YOUTH**

FOREIGN LANGUAGES PUBLISHING HOUSE · MOSCOW

TRANSLATED FROM THE RUSSIAN BY O L G A S H A R T S E

DESIGNED BY Y. K O P Y L O V

## C O N T E N T S

A NAME ON THE MAP. <i>By Valery Osipov</i> . . . . .	5
HEIGHT. <i>By Anatoly Bezuglov</i> . . . . .	17
CHILDREN NOT YOUR OWN. <i>By Nina Alexandrova</i> . . . .	25
DISCOVERY. <i>By Anatoly Agranovsky</i> . . . . .	41
FORTY-NINE DAYS AT SEA. <i>By Boris Strelnikov</i> . . . .	58
THE AWAKENED STEPPE. <i>By Mikhail Dovzhik</i> . . . .	69
HOW THE YOUNG GUARD FOUGHT AND DIED. <i>By Kim Kostenko</i> . . . . .	84
YOUTH. <i>By Valery Vagranov</i> . . . . .	96
ECHO OF WAR. <i>By Arkady Sakhnin</i> . . . . .	106
VALENTINA GAGANOVA. <i>By Dmitry Zvantsev</i> . . . .	121
A STORY OF LOVE. <i>By Konstantin Lapin</i> . . . . .	134
AND LEGEND WAS BORN. <i>By Olga Bergolts</i> . . . .	151
SCHOOL CERTIFICATE. <i>By Kamil Devetyarov</i> . . . .	159
HE CAME BACK TO YOU, RUSSIA! . . . . .	177





## A NAME ON THE MAP

*By Valery Osipov*



What young boy in his teens did not dream of adventure? What young reader did not accompany Jules Verne's heroes on their travels, wrinkling his peeling, freckled nose with the excitement of it? What youthful heart did not miss a beat in the darkened cinema while on the screen strong, bearded men in velvet doublets braved the seas, stormed unassailable peaks and landed on desert islands?

At seventeen, Yuri Khabardin's mind was made up: he would become a sea captain. He wanted to roam the seas and the oceans,

to see the world. There was so much that was thrilling and yet unexplored in those two-thirds of the world, painted blue on all the maps. Who knows, maybe a new Atlantis or a Sannikov Land would emerge from the deep somewhere in the vastness of the Pacific or the Atlantic, and he would be the first to sight it from the captain's bridge some early morning as he scanned the waters through his binoculars. And even if not all of it was called Khabardinia, there would certainly be a small cape or a bay at least named after him because his ship would be the first to enter it. And then, boys all over the world would envy him, reading the new name on the map: "Yuri Khabardin Bay" and the footnote: "Named after Yuri Khabardin from the town of Kirensk in Siberia."

It was all settled: he would become a sea captain. The future "sea salt" packed his books and a few treasured possessions in a suitcase, and was seen off by his family to Vladivostok where he was to spend the next five years in a nautical school.

... A month later Yuri came back to Kirensk. He put his suitcase down in the hall, threw his raincoat and cap on a chair, and without a word to anyone walked straight into his room and flopped down on the bed, his face to the wall. He refused to answer any questions.

Yuri did not get up for two days. He did not sleep, eat or drink, he just lay there, brooding. He got up on the third day. In a strange, hollow voice he told his parents, without looking at them, that he had failed his maths exam.

Autumn that year was mellow, rainless and warm. The sun was always in the sky, turning to gold the wooded hills around the town. Yuri wandered about the streets, spent long hours in the park, or went to see his old school friends. Hardly anyone was left in Kirensk, though. They had gone away to study at vocational schools, institutes or universities in different parts of the country.

He was sitting on the bank of the Lena one day, moodily throwing pebbles into the water. A black-haired man who looked like a gypsy and the driver of the lorry that stood by were exerting all their strength to roll a huge metal drum down from the

self-propelled barge moored to the wharf, but without much success. They heaved once more, and then the black-haired man kicked the drum furiously and turned away to the bank.

"Hey, you," he shouted, seeing Yuri sitting there. "Come on down. Give us a hand!"

Yuri's first impulse was to get up and go away, but then he felt ashamed of himself. Here he was idling his time away while others were putting in all that effort.

The three of them easily rolled the drum down. Now they had to load it into the lorry. The driver leaned a couple of boards against the tail end of the lorry, but the drum was so heavy they could only roll it half-way up. Seeing a length of thick rope on the floor of the lorry, Yuri climbed in, looped it round the drum, tied one end securely to the roof of the cab and began to pull slowly at the other. The black-haired man and the driver helped by supporting the drum on either side. The lever made things much easier, and in a matter of minutes they had the drum safely loaded.

The black-haired man climbed in with Yuri, the driver secured the sides of the lorry, got into the cab, and off they went.

"Who are you anyway?" the black-haired man asked Yuri, getting a packet of cigarettes out of his pocket.

"No one much," Yuri replied glumly.

"Oh, I see. You're Captain Nemo," the man said quickly, lighting up.

Yuri looked at him, puzzled: "Why Captain Nemo?"

"Because Nemo in Latin means no one, nothing. Have you read Jules Verne?"

"I know him by heart," Yuri said with a crooked smile.

The black-haired man looked curiously at the strong, thickset boy with the frank and brave face.

"Tell me who you are anyway, what do you do?"

"I'm a would-be student," Yuri said brusquely. "Or rather I was. At the moment I'm a failure, a parasite on the healthy body of society."

Yuri spat in disgust over the side of the lorry and turned away.

"Here, let me take another look at you," the man said, putting his hand on Yuri's shoulder. "You're a Childe Harold on top of everything else, a sort of Yevgeny Onegin from Kirensk. Tell me all, I'm curious."

And Yuri did. He told him everything—about the land called Khabardinia, about the nautical school, and about the blasted  $x$  that had refused to go outside the bracket, thus drowning all his ambitious dreams on the bottom of the basin "b" that kept filling up with water.

"So the new Atlantis did not rise from the bottom of basin "b", did it?" said the black-haired man.

"No, it didn't," Yuri sighed mournfully.

The lorry drove into the Kirensk airfield and pulled up beside a silvery two-engined plane. Several men quickly got the drum into the plane which had evidently been waiting for it.

"O.K.?" the pilot called down.

"O.K. Good luck!" the black-haired man called back and waved.

When the plane had disappeared behind the jagged fringe of the taiga, the black-haired man put his arm through Yuri's and took him to the airport building.

"Now listen to me, my young Werther from Kirensk," the man said. "Forget all that stuff you told me in the lorry, just forget it. Let the new Atlantis remain on the bottom of basin 'b'. But if you want to become a real man, come here to the airfield at six tomorrow morning with your things and a note from your Mum and Dad that they're letting you go wherever you want to go."

"What for?" Yuri asked.

"You're going to work with me in my prospecting party. There's something I like about you, my lad. You've no bats in your belfry, your reasoning is sound. You're tough too. Besides, you know your Jules Verne by heart. All things put together, you'll make a geologist."

"And what are you prospecting for?"

"Diamonds in the taiga, on the Nizhnaya Tunguska."

"Diamonds?" Yuri repeated, gaping.

"That's right, diamonds. And we'll find them too," the man said with confidence. "There's no doubt about it. Well, what do you say?"

Yuri did not know what to say.

"You mean tomorrow, just like that?"

"Just like that."

"What about the nautical school? I want to be a sea captain, you know."

"Work with us for a year. If you don't like it, you can go and enrol in your nautical school in the spring."

Yuri looked into the man's twinkling, dare-devil eyes, and knew that in the next moment something terribly important was going to happen, deciding his whole life.

"Who shall I ask for at the airfield tomorrow?" he asked, mastering the lump in his throat.

"Ask for Fainstein," the man said, and winked his coal-black eye at Yuri.

That day marked the beginning of a close friendship between the Irkutsk born Communist Grigory Fainstein, a demobbed first lieutenant, who was now a geologist, and Yuri Khabardin, a Kirensk boy. Forestalling the end of our story, we want to say that several years later, in the list of Lenin prize winners for outstanding achievements in science and technology, published on April 22, 1957, Yuri Khabardin's name appeared beside Grigory Fainstein's among the geologists responsible for the discovery of industrial diamond deposits in Yakutia. Six months after that, both Grigory Fainstein and Yuri Khabardin were awarded the Order of Lenin.

\* \* \*

Like all the boys who grew up on the Lena and to whom the vast taiga was home, Yuri was fearless and reckless. For instance, he thought nothing of climbing a fifty-metre high larch and then getting down in a flash using his hands alone, which to the uninitiated looked like a natural fall. He had swum across rivers so rapid that even raftsmen of experience had not risked going across in boats. He had been on bear hunts, and on his own with a spear,

he had also taken part in the famous conquest of the Ulan-Khan rapids, the grimdest and the most unassailable on the Vilyui. The passionate explorer in him now clamoured for expression in some striking, extraordinary way.

Life in the taiga, nights beside the camp fire, long treks along the valleys of uninhabited northern rivers, and the thrill of looking for diamonds, appealed to Yuri so strongly that before the year was out he forgot all about the nautical school and his old dreams.

The geologists of the Tunguska expedition were erasing the blank spots from the map, they travelled through country where no human being had been before. They were carrying on the work of the Russian pioneers, as it were, of the first men to reach the mighty tributaries of the Siberian giants, the Yenisei and the Lena. True, the forbidding mountains and raging streams had already been put on the map by those pioneers, but what the Tunguska expedition was faced with now was a task even more difficult and exacting: to find deposits of diamonds in these forbidding mountains and in the valleys of these raging rivers and put them also on the map.

The taiga, which he entered as a young romantic boy, proved a school of life for Yuri. Working as a geologist in the taiga brought out the best human qualities in him: endurance, perseverance and a taste for plain living. At twenty, Yuri, who had toughened and matured in the austere conditions of the North, had grown out his youthful recklessness and had become a self-reliant, calmly confident man with a strong will. He had been tempered in battle with nature, adjusting himself to the difficult life in the taiga wilds. It never even occurred to him now that there could be any career in the world more interesting than that of a geologist.

He was not sorry that he had not made another attempt to enter the nautical school after a year with the expedition. Trekking through the taiga in Yakutia with his friend and teacher Gregory Fainstein, he penetrated deeper and deeper into the exciting secrets of geology. The earth's ancient and very fascinating history was gradually revealed to him. The intricate yet harmoni-

ous pattern according to which the bowels of our planet had been shaped millions of years ago gave Yuri an introduction into the holy of holies of science. Stratigraphy, geomorphology and tectonics—these studies, facilitating comprehension of the changes in the earth's crust through millenniums, staggered the boy's imagination with grandiose pictures of mountains rising, of the sea bottom receding, and of magma erupting from the lowest depths.

Yuri gasped with excitement when, sitting by the fire at night on the bank of some nameless stream surrounded by giant pillars of weathered rock that stood like silent sentinels, he listened to Fainstein's stories. Many years ago, he said, powerful diamond volcanoes had erupted here, on the Siberian platform, in this country of ancient mountains, throwing up diamond lava high into the sky. Cooling, the lava had formed the diamond craters—the famous kimberlite pipes—which the geologists were trying to locate in the taiga.

Stirred by these stories, Yuri would go into the taiga, lie down on the moss with arms folded under his head, and gaze for a long time into the star-studded sky. Daring plans and ideas obsessed him. He had to find his Atlantis, the mysterious kimberlite pipes, his own "Khabardinia", he had to find it at all costs! The thought had taken possession of Yuri's stubborn mind.

He never parted with his textbooks and studied hard. Geology—a difficult subject for anyone fresh from school—was amazingly easy to master here in the taiga, with all the visual aids nature had to offer. Yuri went through both the theoretical and practical courses of high-school geology in a surprisingly short space of time. Before he had been with the expedition for much more than two years, Fainstein began to entrust him with research that only a full-fledged geologist could normally carry out.

Yuri coped with the tasks well. He made an independent survey of the river beds of the Chirko, Cheka, Lakharkhana and Nizhny Vilyui. The reports he made on routes and geological investigations were succinct and accurate, giving a clear-cut picture of what prospecting in the areas he had surveyed could be expected to yield. Members of the expedition now referred to Yuri

as one of the most gifted young geologists they knew. People who joined the expedition later were invariably surprised that a man so young had already graduated an institute and had earned the reputation of an excellent worker and taiga man. They were even more surprised to learn that Yuri's education had not gone further than ten-year school.

Before long, Yuri was given an assignment of major importance. He was to head a large party and examine the river-bed of the Markoka, where as yet none of the geologists looking for diamonds had ever been. He did the job with his usual efficiency.

After that, Yuri went on leave. Flying back to the expedition's base, he got into an argument with a fellow passenger, another geologist, about the speed of the Markoka's current.

"Now, let's put it down on paper," the man said, tracing the course of the river-bed in his writing pad. "Here is the river mouth, and this is Khabardino here...."

"What did you say?" Yuri interrupted.

"I said, here's the river mouth, and this here is Khabardino, that's what they are calling the place now in honour of Khabardin, a geologist who worked there last year."

"Who calls it that?" Yuri asked with a sort of swooning sensation.

"Why, all the geologists prospecting for diamonds do. Haven't you heard?"

Yuri could no longer worry about the speed of the Markoka, and agreed with everything his fellow passenger said.

The moment they landed in Nyurba, he made straight for the library of the geological expedition and asked for the map of the Markoka river-bed. The word Khabardino was there. It was written in small black letters on the very spot where he and his party had built two huts last year.

The dream he had cherished since he was a boy had come true....

\* \* \*

In the spring of 1955, the young geologists who were working in the reading-room of the Amakinka expedition for lack of prem-

ises of their own, hung up a bright poster on the wall on which the following was written in yard-high letters:

*The world stands gaping and amazed:  
With diamonds Siberia is ablaze!*

It was as popular with the Amakinka expedition as Mayakovsky's posters used to be in the Petrograd of 1917:

*Eat your pineapples and chew your grouse.  
Your last day is coming, you bourgeois louse....*

The last day of the mystery hiding the location of the diamond deposits was really drawing near. The year before, Larisa Popugayeva, a Leningrad geologist, had found the first kimberlite pipe in the Soviet Union, called the "Zarnitsa" pipe. The presence of pyropes there had given her the clue to its whereabouts. All the Amakinka geologists were now in the throes of a "pyrope rush". They recalled that on the routes they had covered before they had encountered lots of reddish little stones that looked like pyropes, but had kicked them aside, completely unaware that they would have led them to the diamonds. And now that the red pyrope had been formally established as the diamond satellite, they believed it would be easy enough to locate the pipes if they went along their old routes.

That spring of 1955, it must be said, the geologists of the Amakinka expedition were perpetually in a state of high excitement. They knew it in their bones that this season would be a turning-point in their search. All of them were captivated by the irresistible and convincing pyrope theory. They only had to wait for the spring waters to recede to start after the diamonds along the pyrope-laid route.

Although the treasure stores still remained to be found, the young geologists already believed Yakutia to be the richest diamond-bearing country in the world, far outstripping South Africa.

There was plenty of hilarity and fun while they waited for spring to come into its own. They believed that red—the colour of pyrope stones—was invested with magic qualities. In order to

find a kimberlite pipe one had to be dressed entirely in red. The case of Larisa Popugayeva was used to squash the unbelievers who doubted this. Larisa, who had flown in from Leningrad a few days before, was wearing a red skiing suit, the very suit in which she had made her discovery of the "Zarnitsa" pipe the previous year. They offered her large sums of money for her "pyrope" trousers, but Larisa refused to sell. Firstly because the trousers were a precious memento, and secondly because they could not be priced in any of the world's currencies, since it was while wearing them that she had discovered the first diamond deposits in the Soviet Union.

Young Yuri Khabardin, a Komsomol member, was getting ready to go on the kimberlite search together with the rest. His party had been wintering in the valley of the Malaya Botuobia river. Beginning from mid-April till the end of May, Yuri often came out of his tent and gazed at the shoals, submerged in melted ice, where the pyrope guiding "thread" was hidden.

The river receded within its banks at last.

"We can start now," Yuri said.

Not in his wildest dreams could he have imagined that only a few days later his party was destined to discover one of the richest diamond deposits in the world—the famous "Pipe of Peace".

This is how it happened.

On June 10th, the 132nd prospecting party of the Amakinka expedition, headed by Yuri Khabardin, set out from their camp on the Malaya Botuobia river. It was a small party. Besides Yuri, it included Katya Yelagina, a geologist, Volodya Avdeyenko, a senior collector, and Innokenty Ievlev, a driver and guide. They also had fifteen reindeer.

On their second day of travelling they reached a small river, the Irelyakh, and continued downstream taking samples every three or five hundred metres. Diamonds and pyropes were discovered in the spits and shoals right away.

"The pipe is somewhere close by," Yuri mused aloud, sitting at the fire that night. "We shan't leave here until we have found it."

The following morning brought them to a marsh-ridden ravine, swathed in fog. The sinister silence of the taiga reigned over it, and only a tiny brook babbled wistfully in the thick grass as it trickled over the stones.

Yuri went to the brook to take a drink of water. Suddenly he yelled: "Quick, come here!"

They all came running, and Yuri pointed to the bottom of the brook.

"Look at all those pyropes! Take my word for it, this brook runs through a kimberlite pipe, and the pipe is somewhere in this valley."

All that day they dug the slopes running down into the valley, but with no result. That night, Yuri sat frowning by the fire, staring in glum silence at the flames. After a while he picked up his rifle and started down the ravine.

"Poor chap, he's taking it badly," Katya Yelagina said.

Suddenly a shot rang out, and a few minutes later Yuri came running back. He was terribly excited.

"I was walking along and suddenly I saw a fox," he told his friends. "An ordinary red fox, it was running along only about forty paces away from me and did not seem to notice me at all, apparently it had never been frightened before. Just as I took aim, I noticed that its belly was a greenish-blue colour. I was nonplussed, but then it dawned on me, why, it's blue ground—kimberlite! The fox had dug its hole in the blue ground, that was it. I fired without aiming, and missed of course."

They began their search anew. Katya Yelagina went down the stream, Volodya Avdeyenko along the right slope of the ravine, and Yuri along the left. He happened on the fox hole within the hour. In front of it lay a small heap of bluish earth.

Dark though it was, they worked all night. They dug several test holes—there was blue kimberlite in all of them, and in one of the holes they found several diamond crystals. In the morning they had the location of the pipe roughly marked and entered on the map. Yuri cut a notch with his axe on one of the tallest larches growing in about the centre of the pipe, and wrote on it with an indelible pencil: "Pipe of Peace. Ministry of Geological

Survey and Conservation of Mineral Resources. Amakinka Geological Expedition."

A few months later the foundations of the new Almazgrad (Diamond City)—the centre of the Yakut diamond region and diamond mines—were laid close to the "Pipe of Peace". And then the topographers and geodesists who followed the builders to the diamond site, put down on all the maps of the Soviet Union the name "Khabardin Ravine" for the once nameless, mist-laden, and mournfully silent ravine.

And what of Yuri Khabardin? What is he doing now?

A Lenin prize winner, and now member of the Communist Party, Yuri Khabardin is on the trek in the taiga as before with a party of geologists. And who knows, maybe the very spot where his tent is pitched at the moment in the forbidding northern jungle, will be the site of another Almazgrad, with lights blazing up above a new diamond mine, and new life breaking into the silence of the taiga.

# *H*erighe

*By Anatoly Bezuglov*



strange as it may sound, Vasily became a spiderman precisely because height gave him vertigo and frightened him.

It happened the day he arrived at the construction site of the hydro-electric power station where he was to work.

"Well, young people, choose the jobs you'd like to specialise in," Dorokhov, the secretary of the Party organisation, said cheerfully, showing the group of newly arrived

workers round the construction site. When he had shown them everything worth seeing, he suggested that they take a bird's-eye view of the place.

"It's quite another thing seeing it from above," he said, smiling, and, for all his corpulence, very nimbly and swiftly climbed up the narrow ladder of the tower crane.

The next to climb after him was Vasily.

About halfway up, he looked down and froze with fear, gripping the cool metal rung so hard that his fingers hurt. The people working far below looked like so many ants, and the huge tip-up lorries appeared no bigger than match-boxes. The construction site was vast, seen from above.

His glance downward only lasted a second, and in that second he fancied that the crane with him clinging to it was toppling over, rushing to meet the ground. A nasty shudder ran down his spine.

"Come on, get a move on," others shouted from below.

But Vasily could not move. He came out of his stupor at last, and slowly continued on the upward climb. A native of Poltava, a steppe region, he had never been so high up in his life, and he was frightened.

Dorokhov noticed the boy's perplexity.

"Well, that's one job you've chosen against already, I believe," he said. "You won't want to become a spiderman."

"I will," Vasily Grekov said stubbornly.

Dorokhov smiled.

"Good. Guts is what a spiderman wants above all else. Only you'll have to overcome this what d'you call it...."

Dorokhov made a vague gesture, but Vasily understood him perfectly, and blushing a red so furious that his large brown freckles were inundated, muttered sullenly: "I will."

Six months had passed since then. In that time Vasily had worked on all the highest points there were, climbing to the top of gantry cranes and high-voltage pylons. Everyone thought him a regular spiderman now, and it never occurred to anyone that he was afraid.

Vasily alone knew how much he dreaded height. He hated this fear of his but there was nothing he could do about it. He

would not have admitted that he was afraid even to his best friend, even if his life depended on it.

It was Vasily's painful secret, and not a soul suspected him of it.

True, everyone knew that Vasily never worked without a safety belt, but they put it down to his discipline and common sense. The other spidermen did not think it queer that Vasily never called anything down to those working below or stopped to admire the view. That, too, they ascribed to his peculiar earnestness and diligence.

Not that Vasily never looked down, he did sometimes of course. When there was no one working there with him, he would look down and come face to face with his mortal enemy—fear.

And he came out the loser in this encounter every time. Fear won. Every time Vasily nervously clutched at his safety belt although he was sure that he had fastened it well and that it was reliable. Having made certain that everything was all right, he would jerk up his chin and look at the sky. Sometimes it was enticingly blue, sometimes pale and bleak, and sometimes sullenly grey. But it was never frightening, and for that Vasily loved it.

He would pull himself together in a minute or two and become absorbed in his work again. But the aftermath of his distressing encounter with fear would not be dissipated for a long time.

For a spiderman there is no sensation more thrilling in the world than the sensation of height. When he has climbed up high into the sky, the spiderman, tingling with pride in his manly job, will first of all take a long, appreciative look at the marvellous view spread out below and only then get down to his work.

It is therefore easy to understand why Vasily, with his proud and stubborn nature, suffered so poignantly from his fear. He envied the other chaps who were not afraid of height, who looked down on the earth from the top of a pylon as serenely as he looked at the sky. And they were all fine, fearless chaps, the whole team. Vasily was proud to be living and working with them.

The one he admired particularly was the team leader, Sanka Krotov. Sanka thought nothing of climbing to a height that no mortal could possibly achieve, it seemed. Ignoring all safety rules,

he undertook jobs that no one would risk his neck attempting. When he was safely back, having averted disaster or made some emergency repairs, Mitroshkin, the work superintendent, would rate at Sanka for violating the safety rules and would even threaten him with dismissal. Actually, he only shammed anger, because it suited him to the ground to have a chap of Sanka's pluck among the spidermen, willing to do the most dangerous jobs at his own risk.

One day Sanka frankly told Vasily that his only reason for risking his neck was to get the extra money the work superintendent paid him for it, at the rate fixed privately between them, and not because he had any love for the job. Sanka—tall and handsome—was very boastful of his reputation of a free-handed chap, and he would climb anywhere just to be able to buy chocolates for all the girls in the hostel.

When Vasily learned all this he began to feel differently towards Sanka. Although he did not condemn him exactly, his liking for him was gone and Vasily felt a coolness that irked him. He tried to make excuses for Sanka and put the blame on the work superintendent. Sanka himself had told Vasily the way it had all started: one day, the work superintendent had called him aside and offered him some money for doing a certain dangerous job. Having accomplished that first job safely, Sanka had gradually acquired a taste for these well-paid risks, and had also developed an amazing nose for money-making opportunities.

For instance, if Mitroshkin said something about their plan being held up because no one could get to the tip of the ice-clad jib of a crane that needed fixing, Sanka would wink at the chaps, take Mitroshkin aside and fix his price with him. Mitroshkin would haggle, grumble, scold, but invariably agree to Sanka's price. Sanka stood firm, there was no arguing with him.

"It's the state's money, but it's my neck, and I've got to earn the cost of my own funeral at least," Sanka would say to Mitroshkin, smiling his broad, good-natured smile.

"It's a deal then. But I know nothing about it. You're doing it at your own risk," Mitroshkin would say and hurry away, so as not to be caught in the act of witnessing a violation of safety rules.

Needless to say, the safety engineer was completely in the dark about this.

Mitroshkin would credit Sanka's account with some fictitious emergency or extra jobs, and no one was any the wiser.

One day, Sanka was caught red-handed violating the safety rules—as usual, he was working without his safety belt. He was demoted from team leader and put in a lower-paid bracket. In his stead, Vasily was appointed team leader.

Sanka was not put out in the least, all he did was raise his price for the dangerous jobs he did for Mitroshkin.

Lounging on the hot sand and watching an eagle in the sky, Vasily was thinking that Sanka ought not to have been punished so harshly and that somebody else, more experienced than himself, ought to have been appointed team leader.

"Hey, team leader, get going, our shift starts soon," Sanka called out to Vasily as he came out of the water.

They had come together for a swim, and while Vasily lay on the sand day-dreaming, Sanka had swum across the Volga and back. Although the river narrowed down at this point, one had to be an excellent swimmer to get to the opposite bank.

Vasily glanced at the sun and hastily put on his clothes. Time was running short.

Their team had a difficult and very important job to do that day. A high-voltage transmission line had to go across the Volga, which was seven hundred metres wide at that point. What the spidermen had to do was make fast the thick cables, hauled up by powerful tractors, at a dizzy height on top of the pylons erected on both banks. From a distance Vasily could see that the first of the cables had been made fast at both ends. It sagged over the river in a huge arc and from below looked no thicker than a guitar string. Vasily's team had to haul up the second cable. They were all there already, checking their safety belts and tools.

Suddenly there was a stir on the bank, then everyone stopped talking and crowded around Mitroshkin who was looking at the sagging cable through a pair of field-glasses. The expression on his face turned into a lowering scowl.

"Hell, a strand has snapped," he said at last.

Each man in turn took a look through the field-glasses, handing them to the next man in grim silence. They had all clearly seen the two thin spirals of wire, that looked like the antennae of a giant butterfly, on the cable about halfway across the river. One of the seventy strands of the power cable had snapped. The cable would have to be disconnected, lowered into a lighter and the broken strand made good. The work would take a lot of time, their plan would be wrecked, and altogether they would have more than enough trouble.

Suddenly, Sanka's cheery voice shattered the tense silence.

"So your showings will touch bottom, will they, Comrade Mistroshkin? Raise your bid sky-high and I'll fix everything. Don't even bother to offer me less. This is a hot job."

Vasily felt the blood rush to his head. He turned on Sanka and swore.

"Oh you..... There's real trouble here and you're only worried about your sky-high bids!"

Sanka narrowed his large, rather full grey eyes, and looked at Vasily with undisguised malice.

"What's eating you, dear team leader? Why don't you do the job yourself? You haven't the guts, eh?"

Vasily neither heard these last words of Sanka's nor saw the grins on his friends' faces. "It can be done... it has to be done..." this thought alone with growing insistence occupied his mind. He rushed to his bag where he had some coils of thin steel wire, thrust them into his pocket, put on his safety belt, and ran to the pylon.

Climbing up the hundred-metre high pylon was easy enough. The dangerous part was ahead. He secured the end of his safety belt, hugged the cable with arms and legs, and began the half-kilometre long crawl high above the Volga.

The people standing on the bank watched fascinated, the cable looked hazy, and the tiny figure of the spiderman appeared to be hanging high up in the sky as if by some miracle.

Working hand over hand, Vasily was making progress. The sagging cable made it quite easy going down. He tried to keep his mind on other things, and before he knew it he was there. The steel antennae of the broken wire were trembling nervously

as if ashamed of themselves for causing the spiderman all that trouble. Vasily locked his safety belt on the cable, and hung suspended over the void, his body swung to and fro by the gusts of the rising wind. His hands worked swiftly and deftly.

The narrow safety belt now carried his entire weight. His back grew terribly numb. The cable was soon fixed. With the nimbleness of a tight-rope walker Vasily swung about and started on the way back. But the going was much harder now, he had to crawl upwards and besides his back was so numb that it hurt. All at once he realised to his horror that the end of his safety belt was no longer sliding along smoothly. It got caught between his knees all the time and so he had to let go of the cable with one hand to hitch it up. It was difficult and unnecessary, it was just a waste of strength. And he needed all the strength he had. He had still a long way to go to reach the pylon.

Vasily took a grip on himself and faced the thing squarely. On the upward crawl the safety belt was no support for his body anyway. It was a hindrance, rather. True, it did allow him a second or two of rest, but his back was so sore that touching it was agony. The belt would only come in useful if his tired hands let go of the cable and left him dangling from it like a sack.

The thought stabbed at his pride. He could almost see Sanka's mocking eyes, and the way they would all look at him dangling helplessly over the water. No fear, he would not give them the pleasure! Hugging the cable closer, Vasily quickly undid the safety belt.

It was the first time that he had nothing to fall back on at any great height. He had to fight his mortal enemy single-handed now, and he could expect no mercy. Vasily clenched his teeth, mustered all his will-power, and started up.

With the nerves in his back he sensed the void and the water below. It was a good thing that he was crawling face up and could look at the sky. It was clear, blue and kind that day. The sky was his friend and ally, and gazing at it Vasily gained confidence and strength.

The wind increased in force; it had sent small nervous shivers down the cable before, but now the shivers had become jolts.

Every jolt made Vasily tense his muscles. His hands, so strong and obedient as a rule, felt dead and strange with fatigue.

At moments he fancied that his tired hands had already let go of the cable and he was hurtling down into emptiness. He would stop, gasping for breath from fear, relax his arm and leg muscles one by one, and start moving again.

His body was dripping with sweat, his head felt so heavy that it drooped, making breathing difficult. Every movement cost him a superhuman effort, and the cable seemed endless. At last he saw before him the top of the pylon. That meant that he had only a few metres to go. He rallied his remaining strength and, forcing his leaden hands to obey, crawled up a little way. As though taunting him, the top of the pylon also seemed to move . . . away from him.

Vasily hung motionless. A thought no longer frightening flashed through his mind. "Well, that's the end. I won't make it . . ."

But then he jerked up his chin, angrily pushed the thought away, and crawled on. . . . His hand touched metal, and he trembled with joy.

Slowly, careful not to make a false move, Vasily climbed on to the rung and sat down. Breathing hard and enjoying the feeling of calm that was flooding his being, he looked down at the frothing waves below, at the majestic panorama of the construction, filmed with a bluish haze.

For a while Vasily sat looking down without understanding where he was looking. All at once his eyes lighted up and he beamed. Why, he was not afraid! It was the first time that he felt no fear looking down. For the first time in his life he was enjoying the thrilling sensation of height.

Now he looked down at the crowd of toy-like men standing at the foot of the pylon, waving their caps at him.

Sanka stood apart from the others. Vasily knew him by his yellow hair that gleamed in the sun.

Mad, reckless joy surged in Vasily. He stood up on the rung, waved his safety belt at the crowd below, and gave a loud shout of laughter.



## **CHILDREN NOT YOUR OWN**

*By Nina Alexandrova*

When autumn came and brought with it rains, Shura stopped going to Kachino. Afterwards, she often recalled the quiet little river, the stretch of sand, and the two children she had thought so amusing at first.

The boy of five or six and the three-year-old girl with golden glints in her short curly hair always came to the river alone, with-

out grown-ups. The boy walked ahead leading the girl by the hand as if he were her nanny. He gave her permission to do this, forbade her to do that, he cajoled her, scolded her and played with her.

As a rule Shura came on week-days when there was hardly anyone there. The reason why she had chosen that particular spot was to study in peace and quiet for her exams, which were coming all too soon, and she did not want anyone bothering her. In spite of herself, however, she kept glancing at the children to see what they were doing. Holding hands, the two would wade into the water, pick up pebbles from the bottom and then proceed to build their castles and fortresses in the sand. The little girl often cried: it was too hot, or too cold, or she was tired and sleepy. The idea of letting such small children go to the river by themselves dismayed Shura.

Little by little she and the children got used to one another, and Shura often heard the little boy say to his sister: "Look, auntie is going for a swim", or "Stop crying, auntie wants to read her book", or "Come along, auntie's going home too".

The children were obviously curious about this strange "auntie", and Shura herself would have liked to make friends with them, but she simply could not afford it with time running so short.

One day, as she was getting ready to eat her lunch, she saw the boy staring at her.

"Shall we have some lunch, children?" Shura called gaily, and gave each of them a pie.

From the way they bolted the pies she guessed that they were hungry. After that, she always took enough lunch for the three of them.

"Why doesn't your mummy ever come?" she asked the boy the question that had long been bothering her.

"We have no mummy," he replied.

"And your daddy?"

"Daddy's working."

The boy answered with reluctance, and Shura decided to ask no more questions. Even the smallest children have things in their lives they do not like to talk about, so it was best not to pry.

Quite suddenly one afternoon the weather turned bad, and the children started for home at a run when rain began to fall.

"Auntie Shura, come home with us, it's raining," the boy shouted to her.

Shura took one look at the lowering dark sky, picked up her books and hurried after the children.

The cottage they brought her to looked cosy and neat. There was a door mat in the front hall, and Shura wiped her shoes very carefully not to muddy the floors. But the sight of the living room staggered her: a grimy lace curtain, hanging by one nail, trailed on the dirty floor, a boy's shoe adorned the centre of the table, and a saucepan with some dried porridge in it stood on the floor.

The numerous volumes filling the book-shelves that lined the room struck an incongruous note amid this squalor. "He reads, does he, with the place such a mess," Shura thought resentfully.

She picked up the saucepan, and the boy looked surprised.

Shura did not particularly care for housekeeping, her mother did that at home, but here, in this strange house, she suddenly felt an irresistible urge to roll up her sleeves and get down to it. With no one but the children there, she felt strong and confident.

"Come on, Vitya, show me where the mops and pails are kept. We'll heat some water and scrub this floor," she said.

The children thought it fun and were eager to help. Vitya brought some firewood and got the kitchen stove going. The girl was too young to be anything but a nuisance, and so Shura made her sit on the sofa and play with her doll—a beautiful, very expensive doll with long yellow locks.

"Daddy said Auntie Dasha would come," the little girl said.

"Who's Auntie Dasha?" Shura asked, furiously scrubbing the window sill which had candy papers stuck to it all over.

"Auntie Dasha used to come and clean for us when mummy was alive," the boy explained in a small, quivering voice. "But then she fell ill too. She used to live here, next door."

Shura nodded in sympathy. Poor kids, no mother, their auntie Dasha sick, and only their queer book-loving father to look after them!

The rain had stopped, it was time Shura went home, but she was so sorry for the children that she stayed with them till late.

Still there was no sign of their father.

"Daddy always comes late," Vitya explained.

\* \* \*

Shura did not go to the river again, it was always raining, and then her exams began. She might never have met the two children again but for mere chance.

It was already winter. Walking down the street in Moscow she suddenly saw them. Perhaps they had seen her first because they came running towards her with shouts of "Auntie Shura! Auntie Shura!"

They were with their father. He was a man of medium height with wearily drooping shoulders. He came hurrying after the children, puzzled and anxious. And then he seemed to understand from their joyful shouts that "Auntie Shura" was the girl they had made friends with in the summer.

"I have heard so much about you from my youngsters," he said, studying Shura curiously. "I'm very glad, very glad indeed to meet you."

"I wanted to meet you too, I even stayed and waited for you that day, you know the day...."

Shura did not go on. Really, what was the use of reminding him that she had once scrubbed his room? Meddling in someone's life was not very nice, after all. On the heels of this thought came a memory of the children wading into the river by themselves and the saucepan of porridge standing on the floor. No, she did not have to spare his feelings!

"It's ridiculous the way your children live," she said excitedly. "Forgive me, it's no business of mine, I'm only a stranger.... But I think it's terrible. You must either get a nurse for them or marry someone...."

"I know. But marrying someone is not as simple as that," he said with a smile.

Without any resentment or impatience he told her how he had at first wanted to put the children in a nursery home, but had then changed his mind, deciding to keep them with him in Auntie Dasha's care, when Auntie Dasha fell ill so suddenly. . . .

Although he only spoke of the children, Shura caught herself thinking of his own plight, how hard it must be on him bringing up the two alone.

The man Shura had thought of as a queer sort—buying his children expensive toys and yet letting them go to the river by themselves, lining his shelves with books and not worrying about the squalor they lived in—now suddenly appeared in a different light to her. What a kind, tired face he had, and what a good smile.

And she was glad when he rang her up a few days later.

"Will you come to the circus with us next Sunday, Auntie Shura?" he said. "Auntie Shura" accepted the invitation with pleasure.

\* \* \*

Shura had always worshipped strong, courageous people. "People must be like Chapayev—courageous, bold and resolute," she wrote in her last school essay, the theme being "My Favourite Hero". And she herself was like that. She went in for parachute jumping, mountain climbing and cross-country skiing. And now, strangely and suddenly, she fell in love with a man of quite a different sort—gentle, diffident and irresolute.

The reason why is difficult to explain—was it because she was sorry for him in his plight or because she admired the patience with which he accepted it? The beginnings of love are sometimes difficult to trace.

The whole thing began the day they went to the circus. When Shura arrived there in time for the noon show, looking pretty and elegant in her best suit, she was startled by the unkempt appearance of the two children. The girl had dirty ears, her hair was matted, and the boy's neck was simply black.

"Look, Vikenty Nikolayevich," Shura said to their father. "Let's go to the three o'clock matinée instead, shall we? They

have two matinées on Sunday, and while you're changing the tickets I'll take the children home and give them a bath."

She expected him to get angry. But he did not. He said nothing for a while, then he looked first at his children and then earnestly at her.

"Shura my dear, you're a wonderful person, there's so much real warmth in you...."

Shura's family tried to reason with her: it was silly for a young girl to marry a man so much older and with a family already, it was foolish to leave Moscow and go and live in some unknown place called Kachino. But Shura's mind could not be changed. Resolutely she brushed aside all objections and doubts, married Vikenty and went to live with him in Kachino.

She seemed to bring the sunshine with her to a house that had long been denied happiness and joy. Shura was very happy at first. True, her new life was anything but easy with stoves to heat, water to carry up from the well, and the train to catch every morning to Moscow. She got up early and went to bed late.

But she carried her new burdens easily, with good cheer. She wanted to make her new home a different place, to stamp out all traces of its former misery.

After work she hurried home. It was nice to know that someone was counting the minutes, waiting for her, that the moment her train came in the children eagerly ran to the window to try and catch a glimpse of her walking between the trees. If she happened to be detained in town, Vikenty would come out and meet the train. He often rang her up at work to tell her not to bother with the shopping, that he had bought everything already.

Her husband's readiness to relieve her of all the harder jobs, his tender concern for her and the children, never ceased to amaze her.

Auntie Dasha, a kind-hearted, fussy old woman, had fully recovered, and helped round the house now.

Was not Shura's happiness complete? What clouds could be threatening the well-ordered life of the new family?

One day, walking past a group of women standing beside the well, Shura heard one of them say: "Look, that's Vitya's stepmother."

Shura smiled. The word "stepmother" was so deeply rooted in her mind in association with the "bad stepmothers" of fairy tales, that it struck her as ludicrous.

"Auntie Shura, may we call you mummy now?" Vitya had asked her one day, with emotion and diffidence in his voice, anxious to keep and hold the mother's love that had been restored to them.

"Yes, my darling son. Call me mummy," Shura had said, hugging the boy.

... Troubles are like diseases in the way they come. Some creep up, unnoticed, stealthily doing their dirty work, others fell a person at a blow. Shura's trouble had long been waiting at her door, but it descended on her like a bolt from the blue. Her husband loved another woman, not her, Shura. He carried another woman in his heart, in his dreams.

It happened late one afternoon. Someone rang, and Shura admitted a young woman she had never seen before, a woman with an olive complexion and light brown eyes flecked with gold.

"Is Vikenty Nikolayevitch at home?"

"Yes, do come in," Shura said, and called, "Hello, Vikenty, someone to see you."

There was nothing extraordinary in someone coming to see them so late in the afternoon, and they talked commonplaces like old friends usually did after a long separation. The woman was passing through Moscow, and it was obvious that she would have to stay the night: it was late for one thing, and then she probably had nowhere to go. As Shura made the beds she listened to their conversation with half an ear. Something she heard gave her a jolt.

"You didn't tell me, Vikenty, that you had married again," the woman said.

Vikenty said nothing. Shura glanced at him. He sat with downcast eyes, while the woman stared straight at him with a sharp, questioning look.

"Yes, Lyuba my darling, yes. I'm married you see. . . . Shura is a real mother to my two. . . ."

"What's wrong with him? Is he making excuses?" Shura thought, bewildered.

Shura went into the kitchen.

"Why did you ask her to stay?" Auntie Dasha grumbled. "What does she think she is, a relative of yours or something? I know all about her. . . ."

Shura refused to listen, she hated gossip. But next morning she woke up with a sense of impending disaster. Something was not quite the same as usual. Of course, it was their visitor, that's why she had that feeling. Shura hurried off to work, leaving the woman asleep on the sofa.

When she got back that evening, she was told that Vikenty and little Tanya had gone to see the visitor to the train. Shura was relieved. However, she began to worry when an hour went by and they did not return. She heard another Moscow-bound train go past, and then, putting on her coat, she walked quickly to the station. The first person she saw on the dimly lighted platform was little Tanya. A strange woman was holding her by the hand and saying insistently:

"Come on, little girl, show me where you live, I'll take you home. . . ."

"Mu-mmy!" Tanya screamed, pulled away from the strange woman, and rushed into Shura's arms.

"It's a disgrace leaving a child here alone, and so near the tracks too," the woman rounded on Shura. "That's how children get killed, through sheer neglect. . . ."

Shura was not listening.

"Tanya, my poor little darling," she was saying, holding the child close. "Where's your father? Where is daddy?"

"He left . . . he left with that auntie," Tanya sobbed out.

"He left?" Shura repeated, startled. "How? What about you? What did he say?"

"To me? Daddy didn't say anything to me. He stood here with me. We just stood here. But when the train began to move he jumped inside and went away."

Shura carried the little girl home and did not even feel the weight. So that's what he was capable of! Leaving little Tanya on the platform, forgetting all about his own child....

That night her husband did not return. And all that Auntie Dasha had left unsaid now became self-evident. Yes, he loved another woman. The one who had slept here, whom Shura herself had let in. How terribly he must love her, how all-consuming must be his passion if he, a mild, reserved man who never flared up or lost control, could forget the world in that moment of parting. A whirlwind had swept him up and thrown him into the moving train. So frightening it must have been then to let her go, so unbearable to stay behind without her.

Shura decided to leave. There was nothing to hold her and Vikenty together. Yes, it was true, there was no use deceiving herself. He had always loved that other woman, even when he was kissing Shura and begging her to marry him. He needed a mother for his children, and that other woman probably cared nothing for them. And then he had sought out Shura. She had rushed into his arms herself, stupid, simple girl that she was. He had arranged his life well: his love, passion and tenderness he gave to that other woman, and to Shura he gave the privilege of being his children's nanny and his housekeeper. "Nannies are hard to find," he had complained to her once. Well, he had found one.

Shura threw things helter-skelter into her suitcase: underwear, sweaters, handkerchiefs, shoes.... Hurry, hurry, anything to leave this house! Let it become as dirty, squalid and slovenly as before. She glanced at the sleeping children with strange malice. She'd played nanny long enough!

She sat down and wrote a note, telling her husband she was through. She put on her coat and started for the door. It was the end! From force of habit or perhaps absent-mindedly she tucked in Vitya, who had kicked his blanket off. And all at once she was struck by the thought that they would wake up the next morning to find her gone. She could not take a step further.

These children were not hers.... The boy, sprawling across the bed, and the girl with traces of recent tears still on her face, what were they to her? Nothing. They were neither her own

children, nor children related to her. They were just a boy and girl she met casually on the river bank. The children of a man who had never loved her. Could anyone say that she owed them anything, that they could rightfully claim her tenderness, her love? These children were strangers . . . "May we call you mummy now?" . . .

The poor mite, he has to lose his mother again. . . .

Shura was resolved to break off her marriage, she was strong enough to leave without regrets, without a backward glance. . . . But there were these two who had made themselves part of her life, these little strangers to whom she had become a mother. Surely she had not made them feel secure and loved only to fling them back into the gloom and chill of orphanhood? They had lost their own mother, and could Shura, who had given them back the use of the very word mother, could she condemn them to suffering now, to the greatest tragedy a child can know—losing his mother?

In this, the hardest moment in her life, her duty to these strange little children was like a great weight tied to her feet. She hurried to the door, stopped, and did not go.

Vikenty returned early next morning.

"Shura dear. . ." he began, ashen with emotion.

"Don't. Don't say anything," she cut him short roughly.

She could not stand the sight of him that morning.

\* \* \*

Outwardly, their life was running a normal course. It was a family like any other: father, mother, children, nanny. Aunt Dasha grumbled sometimes, and sometimes the children were naughty. The father was a busy man and did not come home till late in the evening. The mother got up early and left for Moscow. The children were impatient for her to come back, they welcomed her with shouts of joy, laughing, and telling her their news.

Vikenty tried with tenderness and kindness to make Shura forget. But Shura could neither forget nor forgive. He loved the

other woman, she knew, no matter how hard he tried to hide it, or how affectionate he was with her. He could not destroy his love, he could not forget the woman. Shura actually felt sorry for him sometimes because he had been compelled to renounce a love so passionate and so profound for the sake of the children. She herself had been unable to quit because of the children. She did not blame her husband, she pitied him. But that did not make it any easier for her. It's just the way life sometimes fails to make its ends meet.

Shura had new trials awaiting her, as if the tragedy she constantly carried in her heart was not enough. This time it was Vitya.

He was in the fifth form then. Coming back from Moscow one evening Shura found a summons from the militia informing her that her son was under arrest for stealing.

Who, Vitya—a thief? All the way to the militia station Shura believed it was simply a mistake. But it was not. Vitya himself admitted his guilt. He and a couple of other boys had been caught in the act of stealing the New Year tree bought by the school. They had meant to sell it and split the money between them.

On Shura's responsibility Vitya was released. She was too overwhelmed to speak on the way home. Vitya was a thief! So that's how good a mother she had been!

When they got home she made him sit beside her on the sofa and listen to what she had to say. His face was haggard and glum. Suddenly Shura realised, appalled, that she might be talking to a blank wall. It was not Vitya sitting beside her, but a boy she did not know. It was not her small trusty friend she loved so, not the child with the huge, dark grey earnest eyes. She recalled that horrible morning just after Vikenty came back. She had been sitting on the sofa, miserable, hurt and exhausted after her sleepless night, when suddenly she heard Vitya's soft, gentle voice close beside her:

"Mummy, was daddy very mean to you?"

Shura had been startled. How did the little boy know? Her husband had just returned and they had hardly spoken.

"Why no, no my dear, of course not," Shura had said quickly. "I thought he was," Vitya had said, looking away, and after a moment's silence continued: "Mummy, don't be too angry with him, all right?"

Tears had choked her: he was pleading his father's cause with her, while understanding her own hurt and anguish. With difficulty she had found the words to make her lie convincing, and he appeared to believe her. But for a long time afterwards she had felt that Vitya was watching them apprehensively, trying to catch their every word.

And now this boy who had become the joy, the sunlight and the pride of her life, was pushing away her hand, refusing to look at her, and rudely telling her to leave him alone.

Vikenty was flustered when Shura told him about Vitya's rudeness to her.

"Come, come, Shura dear," he said. "Vitya loves you so...." She did not want to be reassured or comforted—what was the good of it?

Until then Shura had never even contemplated giving up work. Like most people who start working early in life, she regarded it as an integral part of her existence. Yet now she had to give it up. She had to devote her entire attention to Vitya to help him through that difficult period in his life. Adolescence is like the early spring when the fruit-trees are in flower and the fruit is being formed. Adolescence, too, has to withstand its first hard rains, its first thunderstorms, and early morning frosts. As in an orchard the question arises: to be or not to be? Will the man grow to his full stature, developing all his inherent splendid qualities, or will he fall to the ground like a shrivelled, ugly apple?

Shura was an ordinary draughtsman but she loved her work. She thought of the bridges she drew out with the pride of a creator. They would be erected in places far away where Shura had never been, and across them would roll long trains and cars....

She handed in her notice, explaining to the amazed manager that she had to devote herself to the upbringing of her children. She promised to come back in a year or two if things were going

well with them. Hastily she wound up her affairs, said good-bye to her office friends, and left.

The magnitude of the step she had taken was not fully appreciated by her at first. Lots of women stayed home and cared for their families, there seemed nothing wrong with it. But once her housekeeping became a routine and life narrowed down, as it were, and came to a standstill suspended between the market and the water well, Shura became miserable with boredom. She saw her aim as clearly as ever—Vitya. Still, the world lost much of its brightness for her, as though it were overspread with a dense grey cloud.

"I am surrendering all my principles," Shura thought. "First, I stayed on with my husband although he loves another woman and has been untrue to me. . . . And now, I have given up working."

When a person is working it is easy enough to follow his career: from apprenticeship to master of the trade. But success is difficult to evaluate and gauge if a person is doing his job at home where strangers' eyes seldom pry. No yardstick can then be applied.

Sometimes, when climbing a mountain you get the feeling that you are going down and not up. It was the same with Shura. Whereas it seemed to her that she was yielding ground and surrendering her principles in love and marriage, she was, in fact, attaining a loftier sense of duty as a mother and a human being.

The first thing she did was to make a closer acquaintance with Vitya's friend Slava, the initiator of the theft. She saw at once that Slava was the stronger of the two, and there was no guarantee that Vitya would not follow his leader again if that leader asked him to join him in some shady business.

Watching the boys made it clear to Shura that what they needed was an outlet for their energy, inventiveness and daring.

"Wouldn't it be a good idea to make a skating rink in the school yard," Shura said to the sports master one day. "All the boys do in the winter is go to the cinema."

"Would you help us? There are only fifteen of us teachers, and over a thousand parents, you know."

"Gladly! Tell me what to do," Shura said.

There was a great deal to be done, it appeared, but Shura had no intention of backing out. She felt she had no right since all her time was her own.

Back from school one day, Vitya asked her:

"Mother, is it true that you're going to be our ice hockey coach?"

"Who? Me? Why, Vitya, I haven't skated for seven years now."

"And Slava says you promised."

"Don't you believe everything your Slava says."

Suddenly she remembered that she had talked about ice hockey with Slava once. She had come across him and a crowd of boys playing with an empty can in the middle of the road, and had spoken sharply to him.

"You'll get hit by a car. And then what sort of game is this anyway? Why don't you learn to play real ice hockey? It's a wonderful game."

"Do you know how to play it?" Slava had jeered.

"I could teach you anyway."

Slava had either taken her words as a promise to teach them or perhaps he had thought it would be a good joke on her, but whatever his reasons he had told all the boys that Vitya's mother was going to coach them.

"After all, why shouldn't I?" Shura thought. "I know the game, I used to play for a good team."

"Mummy, let's go to the skating rink," Vitya said, as if in answer to her thoughts. "You can try. There's no one there now, not a soul."

Shura laughed at his suggestion at first. Imagine going to the skating rink when it was after ten! But all at once she was eager to go and try. She was only 27, not so very old really.

She was rather clumsy on the ice at first. Vitya skated in circles around her telling her it was all right, that it was always like this at first, and that she was doing fine. His old tenderness came back into his voice; he very obviously wanted her to make a good show. Leaning on Vitya's shoulder she gradually recovered her

balance, and soon she was skating confidently in her customary style, almost like a man swinging her arms sharply and pushing hard with her legs.

"Mummy, you're marvellous!" Vitya was overwhelmed.

The ice that had formed in their relations after the New Year tree incident was broken. They were friends again, as before. After all, it is really difficult to be friends with somebody who is always superior to you in everything and never needs your help!

One thing followed another, and once Shura started coaching the boys she found herself getting involved with them more and more. One day she stood up for a fat, clumsy boy whom the others were always teasing. Another time she got a pair of skates for a boy who could not afford them. She saw a big boy crying because he had lost his gloves; this struck her as very strange. When she found out that the boy was afraid to face his grandmother, a very mean soul, she went home with him and made it easier for him.

Shura was generously endowed with that which we sometimes call charity, sometimes responsiveness and sometimes understanding, but which in actual fact is much more—it is a sense of responsibility for the life and fate of the people one meets across one's path.

At a general meeting of parents at school, Shura was elected chairman of the parents' committee, and now she had not two but seven hundred strange children to look after.

A chance encounter with two children on the river bank had quite unexpectedly changed Shura's entire life which she now devoted to the upbringing of youngsters.

There is logic in people's actions, and there is a purpose in every Soviet man and woman's life, wherever he or she may be.

It would be splendid if everyone who had suffered in his life might be recompensed a hundredfold. But, unfortunately, there is no such savings bank in the world from which one can draw the equivalent of what one has put in in effort and feeling. And how can people be rewarded for courage in private life, for sticking to their guns, though gravely wounded, in their own home? A great deal in this young stepmother's life has remained unre-

warded, and her early wrinkles will not be smoothed away. However, some reward at least was forthcoming.

One day Vitya was sent to the headmaster for tearing a girl's sleeve quite unintentionally when playing tag during break.

"If you don't say you're sorry to the girl at once, I shall let your stepmother know," the headmaster said.

Vitya, remorseful until then, suddenly flared up.

"I have no stepmother! She's my mother. D'you hear me, my own, my real mother!" He rushed out of the room.

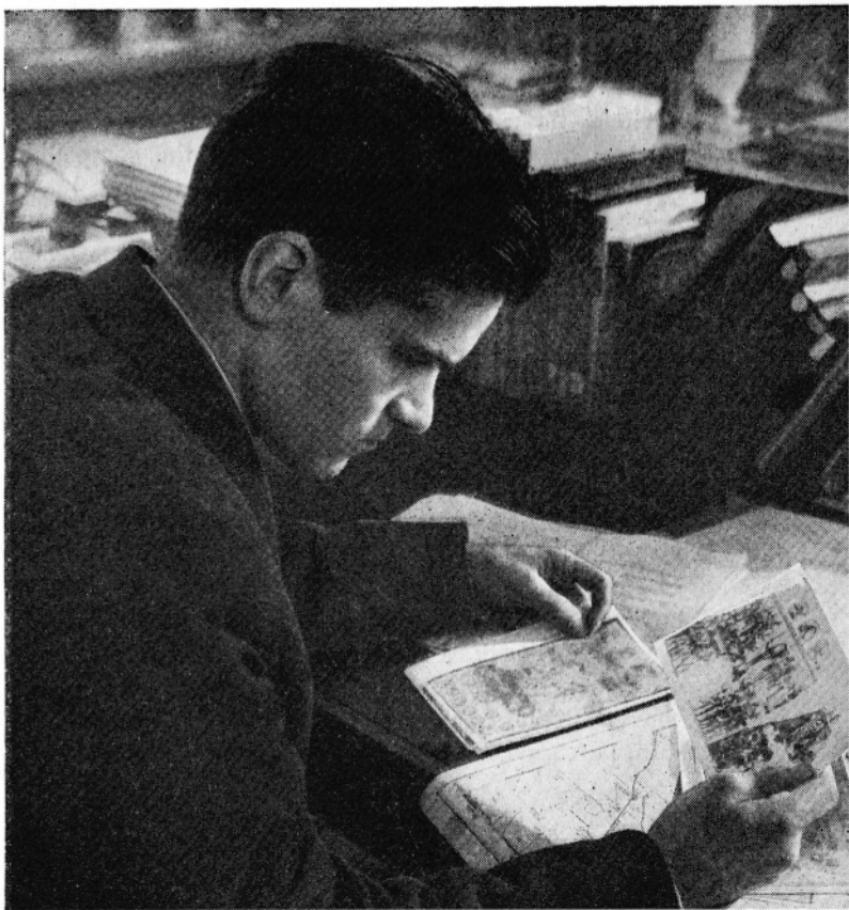
When Shura was told about it, she understood how much had gone into those words once uttered by her little boy: "Auntie Shura, may we call you mummy now?"

\* \* \*

This is a true story, there is nothing fictitious about it. The author has kept nothing back except the surnames of Shura and the children. Let us not mar Vitya's and Tanya's happiness by telling them what has been sacrificed for it.

Anatoly Agranovsky

# DISCOVERY



The very first time I met Yuri Knorozov I felt I had to find out wherein lay the secret of his success. And it was no small achievement for a young scholar to solve one of the most intricate problems in world science, a problem that had defeated hundreds of investigators.

I had been present when Yuri Knorozov defended his thesis. It was rather unusual. He did not have any papers before him, and he did not keep glancing at his watch to manage in the traditional forty minutes. His introduction took three minutes flat, I timed him. He said in conclusion, biting off the words: "These, I consider the principal questions, and on this allow me to finish."

The audience was puzzled.

"Still, it would be interesting to hear more fully about the whole work," someone called out.

Yuri Knorozov did not speak. He was evidently nervous because his cheeks were flushed in spots, yet there was no nervousness in his dark, deep-set eyes. These keen, observant eyes were set very wide apart, a peculiarity which stressed the compellingly determined look in the young scholar's face, and made it hard to forget.

"D'you understand? He doesn't want to work for effect," a girl sitting in front of me whispered to the young student beside her, who replied: "Yes, you're right, it's not ordinary laconism, it's militant laconism."

When his opponents began to take the floor, it became clear to all, even to the laymen, that Knorozov's militant laconism was fully justified, for there is no need to say much where much has been achieved. Thought was not cramped in his terse sentences.

... We know the history of ancient Greece, Rome and Byzantium. The history of the Slavs has also been thoroughly investigated. The ancient manuscripts of Khorezm, Sogdiana and Urartu have been found and published. In school, children learn about the great civilisations of Egypt, Mesopotamia and China. As for the ancient history of the peoples of the American continent, however, all that has come down to us are bits and pieces of half-truth, half-legend. And yet, archaeological finds in Mexico

and Guatemala prove that at the dawn of our era the Mayas had already a civilisation as highly developed as that of Egypt and China. They had hundreds of cities, they had mastered such sciences as mathematics, medicine and astronomy (it is known that the Mayas could forecast solar eclipses); their frescoes and sculptures rank among the greatest works of human art. They had a rich, colourful language, and they also went in for dramaturgy. Satirical comedies were particularly popular with them, it appears. (For instance, one of the titles that has come down to us is *The Sponger*.) We have a poor knowledge of the history of the Mayas in spite of the fact that we know much about their science, art and architecture. And absence of authentically scientific data invariably leaves room for all sorts of mystical, reactionary, racist fabrications.

The only key to the solution of the problem was the written language of the Mayas. The inscriptions discovered in the ruins of the ancient cities covered an enormous period of time—approximately one and a half thousand years. There was the history of the Mayas, written on the walls of palaces and temples, on milestones and on memorials erected in honour of past wars and victories. But the trouble was that no one could decipher the inscriptions, no one could make them speak. Since the mid-nineteenth century hundreds, actually hundreds of linguists, ethnographers and historians of both Europe and America have attempted to decipher the mysterious characters, but one after another they have had to admit defeat.

It was Yuri Knorozov who finally deciphered the writing of the Mayas, and this achievement of his speaks for itself.

The opponents, who are in duty bound to be exacting and I should say even fault-finding, drew a comparison between the work of the young Soviet scholar and the famous discoveries made by François Champollion, the French Egyptologist, and George Grotefend's deciphering of cuneiform. They sincerely congratulated their colleague and wished him success in bringing his brilliantly started work to its completion.

"Your wishes sound rather strange to me," Yuri Knorozov said. "It's too early in the day to speak of 'completion' and 'success-

ful completion' at that. I consider that the work is only beginning. This is a prelude to the creation of a new branch of philology, and that will take scores of scientists and many decades of work."

The audience, obviously in sympathy with this stubborn man of few words, began to clap and smile.

This unusual presentation of a thesis ended as unusually: the academic council of the Institute of Ethnography, U.S.S.R. Academy of Sciences, awarded Yuri Knorozov the degree of doctor, not candidate, of historical sciences.

\* \* \*

I asked Yuri Knorozov if he could spare me half an hour. He took out his pocket diary to make sure, and said he would be free in the middle of the next day.

"About four then?"

"Oh, no," he said without a smile. "At eleven a.m."

Here was evidently one of the secrets of Knorozov's success. A man who starts his day at six in the morning has plenty of time at his disposal. Later, talking about Knorozov with his colleagues, members of his expeditions, professors and everyone else, I often heard him described as amazingly hard-working, persevering and assiduous. That did not mean anything though, for after all there must have been plenty of hard-working scholars among those who had tried and failed to decipher the Mayan inscriptions.

I wondered if perhaps the secret of his success lay in his earlier training. But then, he had made his discovery as a very young man, shortly after his graduation from university. I was curious to find out when, in what year, did he first take up the subject of Indian writings, and what made him tackle their decipherment.

In his first year at the university, Knorozov joined the Egyptology circle, and did very well in the study of hieroglyphs. He was singled out by the professors, who saw in him their worthy successor, but suddenly it became known that Knorozov was attending the department of Oriental studies as punctually and keenly. He was interested in Japanese literature, and was making

a study of the system of Chinese writing. It also became known that in his spare time (it is amazing how he managed it all!) he attended lectures in Arabic philology, and spent hours in the library studying works dealing with the writings of ancient India. . . . He did not have to study all these very difficult subjects at all. Actually, his professors were displeased with him for doing it. The Orientolists told him he was a born Egyptologist and it was senseless cluttering up his mind with Chinese hieroglyphs, while the Sinologists demanded that he should give up the Ancient Orient or at least his ethnography, which was doing him more harm than good. . . . But Knorozov stubbornly refused to heed his teachers, and carried on with his diversified studies.

Ethnography was his sole "legitimate" subject, since he was a student in the Ethnography Department of Moscow University. For his practical training, he went with an expedition to Central Asia where he made a study of the ancient creeds belonging to a given locality, tracked down the last of the shamans practising their craft in the desert, and actually allowed them to "treat" him in order to take down their incantations.

Knorozov had also learnt Spanish, mediaeval Spanish, rather, of Columbus's day. Another subject he had long been keen on, since his schooldays to be exact, was psychology, and this explains why he approached the problem of investigating the origin of Mayan writings from Pavlov's position on the second signal system.

Perhaps this is the secret of his success? That new discoveries are often made when two or more sciences meet is an old truth. But no, the scope of Knorozov's interests as such can hardly explain his success. One can imagine that among his predecessors, too, there were competent linguists, polyglots with a solid background who did not confine themselves to a single science.

But to go on with the story. Exactly when did he undertake the deciphering of Mayan inscriptions? This is what happened, and I don't believe there was anything fortuitous about it. A young student, who was eager and willing to undertake a big job, met a man of equal daring, a prominent scholar who was not afraid to entrust such a job to him.

"Have you read this?" Professor Tokarev once asked him, indignantly stabbing his finger at an article in a foreign magazine he had just received.

"No, I haven't," Knorozov replied.

"Then take a look at what he says here!"

The magazine carried an article by Paul Schallhaas, a prominent German philologist, under the melancholy title: "The deciphering of Mayan inscriptions is an insoluble problem." The scholar had arrived at this conclusion after spending fifty years of his life trying to solve the ancient riddle. Mayan writings, he said, had no sentences, no grammatical forms, they were nothing but ritualistic signs. Attempting to decipher them was senseless.

"Well, what do you say to this?" the professor asked.

The student said nothing. He saw in the article a sinister warning of a wasted life. It must be rather grim to arrive in your old age at the conclusion that you have wasted your entire life solving an insoluble riddle. It made your flesh creep, picturing yourself in the old German's shoes! And yet, even as he read the disillusioned lines, Knorozov suddenly knew that this was the great task he had always been dreaming of. He knew enough to appreciate the difficulties involved, and did not imagine that the problem could be easily solved. He also realised that he might fail. He would try anyway, he decided. It was on the tip of his tongue to ask Professor Tokarev to help him in his study of the subject, when the older man spoke first.

"Would you care to take it up? It will be very difficult work, exceptionally so. But I believe Schallhaas is not right. His challenge must be taken up, the prestige of science must be upheld."

Professor Tokarev's "rash" decision roused censure at the time. Imagine giving a task like that to a student, a mere youngster! Why, scores of eminent scholars in the West had sacrificed their careers to it! How light-heartedly he was ruining that trusting boy! Professor Tokarev thought differently. He held that people should be given big tasks to do. And what of it that Knorozov was young? Was not youth the time to dare? And if he failed? Remember Pushkin's words:

*Whatever holds the threat of peril  
Excites a mortal's heart  
With promise of untasted joys—  
And immortality, perhaps...*

What good were those timid post-graduate students who gave up their dreams of upheavals in science so early in life and limited their ambitions to a passable, inconspicuous thesis? It was poor practice to narrow a theme down to fit a student's abilities. It was wrong to choose his way for him, the easiest and best-trodden path, and give him a task small enough to suit his stature. The loftier the aim the harder a student will strive to attain it, and if he does not, what matter? He will have learned a great deal in the process, he will have learned the main thing: independent thinking, daring and seeking. Without that, what sort of a scholar will he make?

I am thinking of the world in which Yuri Knorozov grew up. I am thinking of his family. Yuri is the youngest son of a Kharkov railway engineer. His eldest brother is an aircraft engineer, the second is a reader in the Artillery Academy, the third a doctor who teaches at a medical institute, and his sister is a biochemist and works in research. There are five of them in the family, all with a higher education, all working in their own branches of science. I am also thinking of the Kharkov Palace of Young Pioneers where the skinny boy with the far-spaced curious eyes had spent many an hour; I am thinking of the public lectures he had attended, of the libraries which let him books, and of the books themselves.

I am thinking of those people, scores of people, who helped Knorozov to become what he is today. Take Professor Tokarev: on the face of it he had nothing to do with his pupil's work because he himself lived in Moscow while Knorozov had moved to Leningrad after graduation. The professor was not his official supervisor, he was not responsible for Knorozov's work to the Ministry of Higher Education. And yet he keenly followed his young friend's efforts from the first day to the last, and was always there to help. Who knows if Yuri Knorozov would have

been as successful had not the people he lived among been so genuinely keen on science. I do not mean scholars alone, though I could name quite a few. There was, for instance, the librarian Agnia Rodionova. She divined a future scholar in the boy she had been watching for a long time, whose love of books had won her completely over, and, breaking all library rules, she lent him a book without which he simply could not go on with his work—a rare Guatemalan edition of the three existing Mayan manuscripts: the Paris, Madrid and Dresden codices.

\* \* \*

Professor Tokarev gave me Yuri Knorozov's letters to read. Here is one, dated Leningrad, April 8, 1949.

"I did not write before partly because I'm naturally lazy, and partly because I'm planning to come to Moscow myself. And besides I have not made any progress yet.

"I want to tell you that I am still busy compiling a systematic table of the hieroglyphs. I've done the greater part of the work already. I am now going to begin studying the Mayan language, archaeology and ethnography. At the moment I am concentrating on the theory of hieroglyphics, and in this connection on the history of graphics generally. The virgin forest this has plunged me into is so dense that I hardly hope to ever find my way out of it...."

He alternated his succinct accounts of what he had done so far with a good joke, sometimes he drew a glyph the meaning of which he guessed or surmised, and once he thanked Professor Tokarev for advising him to read Karel Čapek's *The Salamander War*, which reminded him rather of Lucian, Rabelais and Swift.

Those letters are precious documents. They reveal the characters of the writer and the person to whom they are addressed, and they give the story of the discovery.

Knorozov began by studying the history of the people who had created the writing. He wanted to know what sort of clothes the ancient Indians wore, what crops they planted, what wars they

fought, what gods they worshipped, and, above all, what social system they had. The materials he had at his disposal for the research included the findings of archaeologists and ethnographers, the writings of the Spanish conquistadors who exterminated the Indians, and of the missionaries who converted the Mayan "savages" to Christianity.

For the sole purpose of probing deeper into this ancient civilisation, Knorozov translated into Russian the work of Bishop Diego de Landa, written in mediaeval Spanish in 1566. The author was a great expert on Mayan manuscripts, for it was he and none other who had committed all those manuscripts to the flames during the Inquisition. "We found they had a great number of books," wrote de Landa, "but since they contained nothing but superstition and heresy, we burned them all, which made them amazingly sorry." All that survived the *auto-da-fé*, apart from the stone memorials, were the three codices preserved in Paris, Madrid and Dresden respectively.

It was only after he had completed these preliminary studies that the young scholar ventured to approach the ancient manuscripts themselves. The first six months Knorozov spent copying out the ancient texts. The scribes who originally wrote the books obviously had different temperaments: their handwriting was affected by worry, anger, haste and weariness. Knorozov, writing for long hours at a stretch, was also in haste, he was sometimes angry and tired, and involuntarily his hand simplified and distorted the hieroglyphs to the same extent as may have been admissible then.

Was all this necessary? The Gates catalogue, known throughout the world, lists nine hundred Mayan signs. Knorozov whittled them down to two hundred and seventy. Variations in the manner of writing certain hieroglyphs had misled Gates into taking them for different signs altogether. Knorozov's efforts had enabled him to establish this with perfect accuracy. He was already as much at home with the handwriting in the Mayan manuscripts as we are with the scrawls of our best friends. And since the smallest inaccuracy in deciphering has a snowballing effect, Knorozov's new catalogue may in itself be called an out-

standing scientific achievement. And so he forged ahead with dogged perseverance and an iron will, never permitting himself to put the cart before the horse, so to speak. When I asked him what was the most difficult part in the deciphering, he said: "To refrain from attempting any deciphering." It was not too difficult, comparatively speaking, to read one or another of the hieroglyphs, but the pitfall, into which many a scholar had blundered, was that, once they were convinced they were right they were tempted to interpret a sign not for what it was, but for what they wanted it to be. A scholar should not be prejudiced, he should not wear blinkers.

For long months Knorozov did nothing but "book-keeping"—he compiled long lists and tables. He would take a hieroglyph and write it out in all its combinations with other signs, also all the words (groups of signs) beginning with the same hieroglyph, and all the sentences in which the word occurred. . . .

Knorozov studied the language of the Mayas, an ancient language that had been preserved in the notes of missionaries, in the Mayan-Spanish dictionaries compiled in the 16th century, and in the so-called *Libros de Chilam-Balam*. All these sources gave the Mayan words in Spanish transliteration. *Libros de Chilam-Balam* contained some remnants of Mayan literature: there were calendar texts, texts devoted to rituals, to history, mythology and also prophesies. So far, all Knorozov was concerned with was words. He made more lists, writing out separately all the names of animals, everything that had to do with rituals, and all "weather" words such as sky, downpour, thunder, sun, and so forth. The Mayas lived in the tropics, their chief occupation was farming, and so Knorozov expected not without reason to come across these words in the manuscripts.

His two sets of parallel lists—linguistic and hieroglyphic—were bound to cross one day. It happened in the winter of 1950. Knorozov was alone in his study, it was already two in the morning, the house was deep in slumber. He had just finished compiling the list which it appeared, was to be the last, and was going to turn in, when suddenly he had an irresistible desire to try his

luck there and then, at once, without putting it off for a minute. He was ready. His lists were complete.

He had long since worked out his method of deciphering in minutest detail. The ancient manuscripts had one fortunate peculiarity: the Indians used to illustrate their texts. Therefore, the pictures would help him guess what the pertinent group of signs implied. Knorozov spread out his closely written lists before him, compared them, and with ease read the first two words. They were.



*kuts* (turkey)



*tsul* (dog)

The sign:  *ts(u)* with which the first word ended and the second began, confirmed the correctness of his guess. Surely it could not be so simple? That same early morning he read another word, his third:



*mut* (omen).

And after that? After that, he discovered that the sign



*ku* (making the word "kuts")

which he believed he had deciphered and understood, read differently in other combinations. One riddle followed another, the hieroglyphs got mixed up, they refused to fall into a pattern, to obey any laws.... It was then perhaps that Knorozov wrote his gloomiest letter to Professor Tokarev. This is what he said:

"I'm thinking of giving up my research altogether. I suppose it's the strain I've been working under during the past year. Whatever the reason, I've done nothing at all for more than a month, although I have some interesting books lying around. 'A scorching fire will give you nothing but smoke', said Nizami."

A classic of deciphering is the brilliant discovery of François Champollion. The finding of the famous Rosetta Stone with the bilingual inscription in Greek and Egyptian, had greatly helped the founder of Egyptology. By comparing the signs in the names of Ptolemy and Cleopatra, Champollion had established the meaning of the first hieroglyphs.

On the American continent, there could be no such bilingual inscriptions with translations into Greek, Latin or Egyptian. In other words, there was no use even dreaming of such a piece of luck, no hope of finding a key to the Mayan manuscripts. And that is why the difficulties confronting Knorozov formed obstacles none of his predecessors could surmount.

Actually, the quandary in which he found himself would have appeared disastrous, a blind alley, to many a scholar. After all, others before him had made attempts to read separate words; the method whereby the Indians depicted numerals had been discovered; and last but not least the meaning of nine hieroglyphs denoting different periods of time had been fathomed, if not actually read. All this has been the great achievement of generations of linguists. No progress had been made since, the way was blocked by the same riddles which now confronted Knorozov.

Though somewhat baffled at first, Knorozov was not discouraged because he knew beforehand that he would come up against these difficulties. He knew that in Mayan manuscripts the sound composition of a word would be rendered only approximately. He knew that he would find the principle of "sound corroboration" practised here, that is, one and the same sound being noted twice or even thrice. He knew that he would encounter three types of hieroglyphs: phonetic ones, representing sounds of speech or combinations of sounds: ideographic ones, representing a whole word, and key ones, determinatives not to be read. More than that, he knew that one and the same hieroglyph might be read differently in different cases.

It was this that explained the strange behaviour of *ku*



which, it appeared, could act as a key sign and occurred in all

words denoting time—days, months, etc. To arrive at this, Knorozov again had to refrain from attempting to do any deciphering and compile more lists instead. If the glyph was used in words dissimilar in meaning, he put it down as a phonetic sign, and if in homogeneous words—as a key sign. Thus, he found the “fire sign” which occurred in the words thunder, lightning, and the like, and after that the “woman sign” which occurred in the names of Mayan goddesses, and many other key signs as well. Each new word which he succeeded in deciphering necessitated the compilation of new lists, and though one riddle followed upon another, Knorozov now saw glimmerings—still vague and blurred it is true—of some conformity in the system of ancient writing.

Professor Tokarev, who had been closely following Knorozov's progress, announced the young scholar's success with perfect assurance before a single sentence had been read. Knorozov, who came to Moscow on business, was surprised to find everyone congratulating him. His denials were put down to his modesty, and now “he simply could not fail his friends”, Knorozov said.

He forged ahead—doggedly, systematically and unhurriedly. The last was very important. It is quite out of the question to describe in this article the whole chain of riddles that he had to solve on the way. The following example will give the reader some idea of what he did.

The “Landa alphabet” was discussed and debated by linguists for hundreds of years. It had been compiled in 1566 by Diego de Landa, the bishop who had burned both the Mayan books and the high priests who knew the secret of reading them. This scholar of the Inquisition gave a list of Indian hieroglyphs in his composition: 27 signs and 3 more signs to illustrate the writing of words. All in all there were 30 hieroglyphs and their meaning. This evidence of a contemporary who had been able to associate with Indians who knew the secret of reading ancient writings was of enormous value. But though dozens of scholars tried to puzzle it out in the course of centuries, not one of them could make anything of it.

For instance, de Landa gives the word *chikin* (west) as follows:



According to de Landa, the bottom hieroglyph reads *kin* and the top one *chi* or *che*. So far so good. But then in the same al-

phabet the same hieroglyph *chi*  represents the word

*manik* which is the name of a day. In the first combination it seems to mean *chi* or *che*, but when written alone it reads *manik*. Frustrated in their efforts to explain such absurdities, the scholars, one after the other, refuted de Landa's alphabet. The bishop himself must have been mistaken, or perhaps his Indian advisers had led him astray, or perhaps the whole alphabet was a fraud. By the time Yuri Knorozov entered the field, de Landa's alphabet had been rejected altogether, or at least no scholars had taken it seriously since the turn of the century, and no one had made any serious research into it.

Unlike his predecessors, Knorozov approached de Landa's work critically, as he already knew enough to check on the scholar and see if he was sufficiently competent. He did not begin by puzzling out the alphabet, as others had done, he left that part of it to the end as just one of the lines of investigation.

Knorozov tried to picture that masterful, fanatically cruel yet intelligent man working on the alphabet. An Indian would be brought into his presence, and de Landa would demand: "Tell me, what day is it today?" The man would say: "Manik." "Write it down," the bishop would order him. The Indian would write it down, but the hieroglyph was an ancient one, it might have originated in the first century B.C. when the written language of the Mayas was first conceived. The name of the day, however, might have been changed in the course of over sixteen centuries. That would then explain why the hieroglyph and the pronunciation did not tally. Diego de Landa had copied the hieroglyph as

best he could, given the pronunciation in Spanish letters, and considered his work completed. It was a curious and absorbing task for a scholar working in Leningrad in our day to discover mistakes made in a work written four hundred years ago in Central America. Knorozov found an inaccuracy such as this, for instance: the sound "kh" de Landa wrote as "ch". The tracing of certain hieroglyphs was also hopelessly muddled. On the whole, however, de Landa's alphabet was correct—such was Knorozov's conclusion. "The bishop was rather well informed," is what he says.

To come back to the ancient hieroglyph *chi* or *che* which read *manik*. Knorozov was convinced that its first meaning was the correct one. He had already deciphered the word *kuch* (meaning vulture) in the ancient manuscripts which was written as



. He had no doubts on this score. Though wrongly

traced, de Landa too had included in his alphabet the sign *ku*, the first triliteral sign consisting of three ovals. From the lists he had compiled Knorozov knew that the Mayas only had one triliteral sign, and therefore there was no mistaking it no matter what the handwriting. Now he concentrated on the hieroglyph *chi* that read *manik*, and solved the riddle. The Mayas called the day, represented by that sign, "deer day" and "deer" was *che* in the more ancient language of the Indians. Later, many centuries later, the name of the day was changed to *manik*—evidently the distorted Aztec for *mazatl* meaning deer. And that was how the hieroglyph *che* came to represent *manik*.

Little by little the ancient manuscripts began to reveal to Knorozov the colourful language of the Mayas. Among the words he had deciphered were: "archer", "captured slave", "pyramid", "swarming bees", "to weave cotton". The word "maize" (*ooch in*), he discovered, was represented by signs the exact meaning of which is "the blessing that feeds". He established how the ancient Indians wrote the endings of verbs, and the prefixes of nouns, thus starting the study of Mayan grammar, and finally

he read his first sentences: "rain makes the soil fertile", "the sun scorches everything at this time".

Knorozov began by making a study of the history, culture and social system of the Mayas. It transpired that the Indians had attained the same level of ancient civilisation as the Egyptians, Chinese and other peoples when they created their hieroglyphics, that most ancient system of representing sounds of speech. And so, before he had read a single word or a single sign, Knorozov made his first important surmise: what he had before him was a typical example of hieroglyphics and not phonetical writing consisting of phonetic signs alone as held by de Bourbour, de Plon-geon, Thomas and others, and not ideographical consisting of ideograms exclusively, as assumed by Schallhaas, Tozzer, Morley and Thompson. Having studied the general rules of this system of writing from Egyptian, Chinese and other manuscripts, Knorozov then applied the general laws dialectically to the manuscripts of the Mayas.

Professor Tokarev, to give me a better understanding of the meaning of Knorozov's discovery, compared the deciphering of the ancient Mayan manuscripts with the discovery of the periodic system. Mendeleyev said that new elements, which no one in the world had ever seen before then, would be discovered in the universe somewhere; those elements were indeed found, and their properties proved to be precisely those predicted by the great scientist. In the same way, Knorozov had predicted the properties of the elements of the ancient writing which he undertook to decipher.

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In June 1955, a modest volume, which was the first edition of Knorozov's work, was sent to Guatemala. It was a gift from Soviet science to the descendants of the Mayan people.

When I was in Leningrad last, Yuri Knorozov showed me the numerous letters he had received from different parts of the world. There were letters from France, Brazil, Germany, Spain and Guatemala, the writers were not all scientists or linguists,

the Soviet scholar's achievement had also stirred the interest of ordinary people, engaged in different professions.

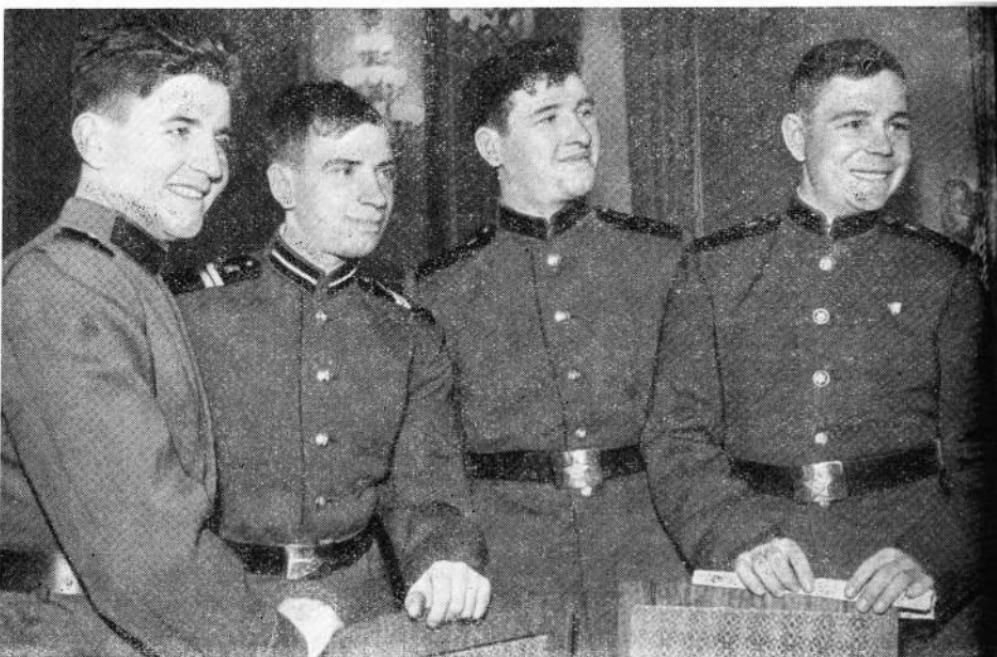
"I hope my letter reaches you safely and I also hope that all the young people in the world will arrive at mutual understanding, dictated by logic, and closer friendship founded on intelligence and culture," wrote Roberto Pertiera from Buenos Aires.

As I read these letters from his friends abroad I finally understood the secret of Yuri Knorozov's well-deserved success.

Yuri Knorozov has made an inestimable contribution to science by finding the key to Mayan hieroglyphs, but it would take more than a lifetime to decipher the three existing manuscripts. This noble task is being continued at the Siberian "science city" near Novosibirsk, where electronic computers have already succeeded in translating more than forty fragments of the Dresden and Madrid codices.

## FORTY-NINE DAYS AT SEA

By Boris Strelnikov



As a rule, the *Pravda* editorial office rings through to me in New York at about nine or ten in the morning. On that particular morning, however, they called me at daybreak. My assignment was urgent: I had to gather all the information I could about the four Soviet soldiers picked up in the Pacific by the U.S. carrier *Kearsarge*, and let Moscow know at once.

My information was very scant just then. The *Kearsarge* was still out at sea, heading for San Francisco.

Press reports said that the Soviet soldiers had been out in the stormy ocean for forty-nine days in their landing craft, that they

had fed on "leather thongs which Russian soldiers use to secure the tops of their soft boots called 'valenki' ", and that when sighted from the airplane "they were standing outside the wheelhouse, huddled together and supporting one another". Press reports also said that the crew of the U.S. carrier were amazed at the Soviet soldiers' courage and spirit.

The morning papers did not have very much to add to this. The *New York Times*, it is true, carried a picture of three of our boys having their first meal on board the carrier. It gave you a stab of pain to look at the photograph of those haggard, bearded boys in tattered uniforms, sitting on a bench with bowls of soup in their hands. One of them had raised his head—his eyes were huge and sunken in his gaunt young face.

Such was the scant information available about the four Soviet boys, whose names were soon on the lips of the whole world. It was evident even from these brief reports that they had done something extraordinary, that they had gone through some unique experience, and had come out the winners in a gruelling seven-week battle with the ocean.

The whole world wanted more details.

I rang up the *San Francisco Chronicle* and asked them to help me contact the carrier by radio. It was three in the morning when I finally made my connection with the *Kearsarge*. The officer on duty said: "They are regular guys," and about five minutes later I heard in Russian from a great distance: "Sergeant Ziganshin speaking."

It gave me a jolt. Honestly, I was so excited that my hand shook when I took down Ziganshin's calm words that the crew was well, that the Soviet soldiers wanted to thank their American friends for rescuing them.

"All we want is to go back home as soon as possible," he said.

"Don't let them worry about us at home," Private Fedotov spoke next. "We acted as Soviet soldiers should."

The conversation only lasted a few minutes, but even in that short time, even without seeing them, I was impressed by their truly Soviet spirit. Though weak and exhausted, the boys sounded as though they were back in the ranks, doing their duty, and

the only thing that worried them a little was the strangeness of the situation they had landed in.

"There were some things left on the landing craft," Zigan-shin said anxiously.

"How shall we go ashore when we have no uniforms?" Fedotov asked. It was a little naïve and yet deeply moving. The boys saw nothing heroic in their feat, all they worried about were the regulations.

### **"Incredible!" the Americans Say**

On arriving in San Francisco, I learned that American, British, French and Japanese reporters had already been on board the *Kearsarge*, having been flown there from Honolulu by helicopter. The San Francisco reporters were now attacking the boys and the commander Robert Townsend, too, while they were about it. When he saw that our boys had all the bothering, heat and flash bulbs they could stand, Townsend gave orders to put an end to the interview. The sailors pressed back the protesting reporters and got them out on deck, but before long they were back, pestering the boys in their cabin. After that, the commander ordered all the reporters to be herded together and "put under arrest" in a cabin until the ship had berthed in San Francisco. Armed sentries were stationed outside our boys' cabin, because about a dozen reporters had slipped away and were biding their time in hiding.

This was evidently why we Soviet reporters were refused permission to go aboard the *Kearsarge*.

The infuriated "prisoners" were only released when the *Kearsarge* was entering the famous Golden Gates harbour. They joined the crowd of reporters already lying in wait for our soldiers on the green landing field.

It was a cool, still morning, bright in the spring sunshine and fragrant with ocean breezes and the subtle perfume of violets. The *Kearsarge* passed under the Golden Gates Bridge, and hooted "good-morning" to the still sleeping city. Immediately doors and windows began to bang open in all the houses, on all the

floors. People cluttered all the balconies, and boys appeared on the roofs.

The yellow helicopters took off from the carrier, made one circle over the waiting crowd and then landed on the green field. Jostling and pushing, the reporters made a rush. The first to emerge from the cabin were the fliers—big, tall men in helmets and goggles, wearing shoulder belts and cork life jackets. The next to appear were Ziganshin and Poplavsky.

They were dressed in the work clothes of American sailors—grey shirts and blue jeans. Anatoly Kardashev, a representative from the Soviet Embassy, reached them first, he hugged both boys at once and kissed them. They had become so terribly thin, that Kardashev's back hid them from view completely.

"Hey, take your back away, we want the boys!" roared the reporters.

Just then, Kryuchkovsky and Fedotov came down from the other helicopter. The flier tried to slip them unnoticed into the waiting car, and though they almost ran to it the crowd was upon them before they knew it. They never had a chance. While they were fighting their way through, one of the officers showed me a copy of the *Kearsarge* commander's report, which I took down in brief.

It said that the *Kearsarge* was proceeding under orders from Yokosuka, Japan, to San Francisco, California. On March 7, one of the pilots of *S2F Tracker*, doing a practice flight, spotted an object tossing on the waves. This object, on closer inspection, proved to be a landing craft. There were four men in Soviet army uniform standing outside the wheel-house, supporting one another. They were 15 miles away from the *Kearsarge*. . . .

The commander of the carrier changed his course at once and made for the landing craft. Helicopters picked up the men and delivered them on board the *Kearsarge*. After some nourishing soup and bread, a wash and a shave, the four Soviet soldiers were put in the ship's sick-bay.

The report went on to say that it seemed incredible that the boys could have been out in the ocean for forty-nine days, but the state of their uniforms, their bloodshot eyes and long uncut

hair confirmed the statement. The ship's doctor Frederick Buckwheat noted that they were half-dead from hunger but in fine spirits, which he found amazing. They had been on the brink of death, and in spite of their condition they were still able to joke and laugh.

The twenty-year-old Private Anatoly Kryuchkovsky used his army belt, with the star, hammer and sickle on the buckle, to show how thin he got. He had lost 8 inches round his waistline.

The four Russian boys were feeling fine, the report said. Private Poplavsky played some games of draughts with Vasil V. Getman, aircraft mechanic first class who also did the work of a storekeeper. Vasil said that Poplavsky had beaten him every time. Vasil comes from Nanticoke, Pennsylvania, where his parents have been living since 1913. He can speak a little Ukrainian, we learnt from the *Kearsarge* report, but he can't write it. He showed the boys a letter he had received from his aunt in Ukrainian and said he was sorry he could not reply in the same language. Poplavsky promised to help him.

Private Ivan Fedotov, 21, took a guitar and played some Russian songs. He had some difficulty with it, however, because the Russian guitar has seven strings, and the American only six.

All the four were anxious to return home as soon as possible, they were certain their own people were worried and were searching for them.

Incredible.... In his report, the commander of the *Kearsarge* used the word twice. The word "incredible" appeared in all the headlines of the San Francisco papers that evening.

### **Ordinary Soviet Boys**

That same night, I took down a conversation between an American correspondent and our boys.

*Correspondent:* I know that in a situation like yours people are liable to lose their human qualities, go crazy, and become mere beasts. Naturally, you had your quarrels, even fights, perhaps, over the last piece of bread or the last drop of fresh water, hadn't you?

*Ziganshin*: In all the forty-nine days the members of our crew never once said a rude word to one another. When our fresh water was coming to an end we cut the ration down to half a mug a day each. And not one of us took a gulp more than he was due. On the day of Anatoly Kryuchkovsky's birthday we offered him a double ration of water, but he refused.

*Correspondent*: You were going through hell and yet you remembered it was your friend's birthday? It sounds incredible. Didn't you ever think of death, Mr. Ziganshin?

*Ziganshin*: No, we were thinking that we were too young to give in so easily.

*Correspondent*: What did you do to kill the time? For instance you, Mr. Poplavsky?

*Poplavsky*: We sharpened fishing hooks, cut spoon-bait out of cans, unbraided the cable and made fishing lines. Askhat Ziganshin used to keep the signalling lamp in good repair. Sometimes I read a book aloud to the others.

*Correspondent*: What book did you read?

*Poplavsky*: *Martin Eden* by Jack London.

*Correspondent*: It's incredible!

*Fedotov*: Sometimes Poplavsky played the accordion and we sang.

*Correspondent*: I'd like to see this historic accordion.

*Fedotov*: You can't, I'm sorry, we ate it.

*Correspondent*: What? How do you mean—ate it?

*Fedotov*: We just went and ate it. It was partly leather. We ripped off the leather, sliced it and boiled it in sea water. It was sheep leather, and so it became a standing joke with us that we had two kinds of meat: accordion mutton and boot-thong beef.

*Correspondent*: You still had it in you to joke? This beats me completely. But do you yourselves realise what sort of people you are?

*Ziganshin*: Why, we're ordinary Soviet people.

\* \* \*

The boys were so unassuming, it staggered everyone who spoke to them. Sometimes their modesty made quite a joke.

A reporter who had flown in from another town asked the boys to answer a few questions.

"Was there food on your landing craft?" the reporter asked.

"Yes," Kryuchkovsky replied.

"Was there fresh water?" the reporter continued, somewhat puzzled by the reply to his first question.

"Yes," nodded Kryuchkovsky.

The reporter was baffled.

"But I was told that you had nothing to eat or drink. . . ."

Anatoly Kardashev and Anastasia Ozerova, the Soviet Embassy doctor, tried to make things clearer to the reporter. Anatoly Kardashev turned to the boys and said:

"Your food ran out on the 24th of February, and all the fresh water you had left allowed you three gulps a day. Do you call that food? Water?"

"Yes, but at first we really did have a bucketful of potatoes and a keg of fresh water," Kryuchkovsky said, defensive and confused. "What he wants to know is not when it all ran out but if we had any on the landing craft. And that's why I said yes. He asked me a straight question and I gave him a straight answer."

\* \* \*

They have different personalities, the four boys. Anatoly Kryuchkovsky is a level-headed sort of chap and he likes to be doing a steady job of work. This enforced idleness was obviously irking him. The only time I saw his calm ruffled was when his dominoes partner bungled the game, and it made me think that if a good friend of his made a wrong move in life, Anatoly's anger would be terrible.

Filip Poplavsky has an inquisitive mind, he has a good sense of humour and he likes a laugh.

I thought he looked sad and so I asked him what was the matter.

"It's that water," he said.

"What water?"

"There was some in the mug left on the landing craft."

"So what?"

"Why, had we known we'd meet the *Kearsarge* that day, we'd have had another gulp each."

Ivan Fedotov, the guitar player and book lover, is the oldest of the four but has the least service. There is something of a sailor's dash in him. He talks to the reporters with less reluctance than the others, and this is what I heard him say once: "At home, on the Amur River, we get even worse gales, and worse things happen, but it's all right with us: we don't care, we go ahead and build cities in the taiga."

Askhat Ziganshin, 22, was in command of the crew of four. Just now, in San Francisco, he tries to make himself scarce and goes a furious red from embarrassment when people sing his praises, but there, in the ocean, he had been a man of steel and courage on whom the crew relied for moral strength.

He truly deserves the honour of having a book written about him.

### **Ballad of a Sergeant**

The story was told to us by Anatoly Kryuchkovsky. He kept his voice low so that Sgt. Ziganshin should not hear him.

They had been drifting for forty odd days. The furiously racing clouds hid the setting sun from view and only the bright blur on the horizon told them which way lay west. Night came down swiftly. The craft was tossed about in the roaring ocean. Around them there was nothing—just a dark, cold waste. Not a light, not a living soul anywhere near, just the four of them, linked for ever now, the closest friends in the world. Not a living soul for hundreds of miles around. . . .

Poplavsky and Fedotov remained in their bunks now, they were storing their strength. All the songs they knew had already been sung, all the stories told. They did not even have the strength to talk, and the silence became menacing.

For the first time in those forty odd days, fear entered one of the four hearts. Maybe it was not fear, the soldier may have decided the time had come to talk of *that* too.

"If we're to die, how will it be?" he said, shattering the silence.

"Oh well, if anyone feels he's going, just let him say so. We'll do the last thing by him. Let the last man to die write our names in red lead on the wall here, died on such and such a date, give our regards to the Soviet Union and to our mothers."

Ziganshin then made the longest speech in all that time.

"No scrawling of names on the wall! I forbid you to think about it, you hear me? In the last few days we saw three ships. What does it imply? It means that we have drifted out to a shipping route, and we'll stay on it. I've noticed that in the daytime we are carried to the south-east, and at night back to the north-west. We are swinging back and forth. We saw three ships already, we shall see a fourth. If the fourth fails to catch sight of us, the fifth certainly will. We still have three pairs of leather boots. They'll see us through March, and in March we'll certainly be found."

And with the thought that they would be certainly found in March, the soldiers fell asleep that night.

In the morning, the same boy who had spoken of dying the night before broke into their favourite, cheerful song. And Sgt. Ziganshin smiled.

And this is what I heard from Filip Poplavsky in Paris when we were already flying home.

"When Sgt. Ziganshin began to rip up our first boot, we thought we'd start eating it at once. But he forbade us to touch it and said: 'I'll eat some myself first, and if nothing happens to me for a day then it'll be safe for you to eat it too.' That's the sort he is."

I next asked Ivan Fedotov about Ziganshin.

"When the gale tossed us on to the Devil's Rocks, I thought it was the end, and actually shut my eyes. But the sergeant steered the craft straight.

"And then, when the helicopters were picking us up I had so little strength left that I tripped on the cable and would have gone overboard if Ziganshin had not caught me and supported me. When we got aboard the *Kearsarge*, Ziganshin said to the

American officer: "Thank you for your help. Will you kindly send us back home as soon as possible." On the way to the sick-bay he fainted."

In all their recollections the sergeant was mentioned every ten words or so: "the sergeant fixed the wiring of the signalling lamp" ... "the sergeant made a distress flag out of his footcloth and hoisted it on the mast" ... "the sergeant grabbed a boat-hook and dashed to the side to harpoon the shark" ... "the sergeant's orders were" ... "the sergeant made"....

\* \* \*

Groups of people were always standing outside the Caravan Lodge in San Francisco in the hope of catching a glimpse of the Soviet boys. This is what I once heard an elderly American say to his friends (I later found out his name was Peter Fox and he was a road mender):

"They're extraordinary sort of people, those Soviets. That's my opinion. I came to know them during the war when we fought together in Europe. True, it was hard on them at first. But who can ever forget Stalingrad? Remember how they broke Hitler's back? It was like a miracle. And they've been performing more miracles since, as you can see for yourselves. They got to the moon. And then take these kids! I'm positive that they behave like that in everyday life too."

\* \* \*

I took Askhat Ziganshin's story down for *Pravda* on the plane going from San Francisco to New York. It was no easy job. Askhat was nervous, I could feel him groping for the best and most solemn words he knew to express how much he loved his country. His emotions sought an outlet, but the words refused to come.

"I'm not good at speaking," he said shyly at last. "Will you please put what I say in some sort of shape for me? Remember, one of the reporters in San Francisco said that we were extraordinary people or something like that. And I told him that we

were ordinary people, we were made of flesh and bone and not stone, we even lost weight like ordinary people do when they go hungry for a long time. Of course we're Soviet people, and that's the main thing. . . .

"People say that if a child has good parents it knows no growing pains. The concern with which our Motherland, our Party, the Komsomol, and the Army, had educated us is something we always took for granted. But a good son will always be grateful to his loving mother. We love our mothers very much. We want to thank them for everything they did for us. And our Motherland we want to thank a hundred thousand times. Till we draw our last breath, we shall always be her devoted and loving sons."

Ziganshin paused for a minute.

"I know my speech is clumsy," he said in some embarrassment. "Maybe you'd polish it up a bit for the paper. Will you?"

"Dear Askhat, dear boy," I said to him. "The words you have just said came from the bottom of your big, brave heart. They are as sincere as your thoughts and as strong as your love for your country. They need no polishing up."



# STEPPE

# AWAKENED

# THE

*By Mikhail Dovzhik,  
Leader of the First  
Communist Work Team  
in Kazakhstan*

We are living and working in the newly developed virgin-soil regions, in country that is little inhabited and little explored. Yet in spite of this, or perhaps precisely because of this, we get dozens of letters from young people who want to know all about our Komsomol youth team, the way we live and work.

And so I decided to write this detailed account of our team's life and work, to tell readers of our difficulties and troubles, to share with them our successes and dreams.

## The Field Camp Is Home to Us

I want to begin my story with the house we live in.

The first year of its existence our Yaroslavsky state farm resembled a tourist camp more than anything else, with tents dotting the steppe with its tall feather-grass. We had trouble with water at first and the delivery of provisions.

I was appointed team leader practically from the outset. It was not easy, of course. Sufficient to say that the team only had a couple of tractors then. But the difficulties did not frighten us. None of us who had come here on Komsomol assignments expected a life of ease or wanted any soft jobs.

We did not have a spare moment at the beginning: we had to cultivate the land and also build ourselves houses. With every day our main settlement began to look more and more like a small town. There were streets of durable, urban type structures and then trees were planted along these streets. Today we have a club house, a canteen, a crèche and many other public buildings.

Apart from building up the main settlement, what we always dreamed of was to make our field camp, where we spend most of our time, into a nice real home.

My chaps had never done any building before, there was no one with any experience in any of the building skills. We badly needed a specialist to show us what to do and then we would manage the rest.

Soon the director of our state farm gave in and sent us a skilled builder. And we began to build. We made the adobe right there in the field camp. We ploughed up a clayey depression near a lake, poured water in, and mixed the mud with straw. Lenya Frolov and Misha Kazikhanov built the moulds for making the adobe bricks.

Our chaps were very quick to learn, they might have been making bricks all their lives. When we had all the bricks we needed for our hostel, Vitya Vasilchenko suggested making more for other buildings as well while we were at it. We all agreed.

Our tip-up lorries brought us enough stone from the quarry for the foundations; we hollowed out an area ourselves and proceeded to lay the foundation and then the brick walls.

It took us less than a month to build a fine house with large, pleasant windows.

Next, we built a repair shop for tractors and farming machinery, a reading-room, a canteen and a kitchen with a basement and a store-room for keeping provisions.

All these are roomy structures built to last. The repair shop, though planned for simultaneous work on two tractors, proved large enough to house a smithy and an electric station.

## Trees

They say that during his lifetime every man should build a house and plant a tree. Well, we were already building houses, so now we had to plant some trees.

I wrote to the Krasnoyarsk nursery asking them to send us some saplings. We were not ready for them when they arrived. What were we to do? If we let the saplings die we'd have to wait another year before we could start making our dream of cool, shady spots come true. We were always dreaming of getting together of a Sunday under some shady trees, to relax and sing a few songs with the spreading trees murmuring restfully overhead.

Volodya Dovzhik had a brain wave.

"It's all right. Let's go to the lake and dig a trench. We'll fill it with water and keep the saplings there until we've made the holes for them."

And that is what we did.

We had worked out the plan of tree-planting in the steppe and at our camp well in advance. Whoever had any inkling of landscaping was asked to collaborate. The greatest help came from Grigory Vladimirovich Sapozhnikov, the director of the state-farm trust, an agronomist by profession with much practical experience. Forest belts, he told us, for which we had allotted 34,000 saplings, had to be planted across the path of the winds

prevailing in our district, and he personally mapped out the plan for us.

Khizhnyak and Aristov—both called Nikolai—volunteered to do the planting. They were enthusiastic, go-ahead fellows, both of them.

Aristov had no papers when he joined my team. He had already been in these parts earlier, but had run away finding the living and working conditions too tough. Evidently his flight had been preying on his conscience, for when he saw the article about our state farm in the newspaper he made up his mind to come back. Since his place of work would not let him go at short notice, he simply packed his things and took the first train here without bothering about his papers. We let him stay with us and took him on our team as a trailer hand. We wanted to see what sort of person he really was. He did not disappoint us. He very soon learned to operate a tractor and other machines and is not doing badly at all. Entrusting the planting of trees to him was quite safe.

The garden we planted at our camp grew splendidly. We called it our city park. There were benches, a whole dozen of them, placed under the trees, and we also played volleyball in our park and had dances in the evening.

"It's fine but we could do with more flowers," Sivenkov, our Komsomol leader, said one day. "And there's no way of getting any from anywhere."

He was wrong. We did get flowers.

This is what happened.

There was a girl called Larisa Zagika working at the Starchenko Seed-Selection Experiment Station in Mironovo. She was an agricultural technician and a member of the Komsomol. The article in *Komsomolskaya Pravda* about our Komsomol youth team must have touched some chord in her heart, because upon reading it she wrote to us asking if she could come and join our team. Good folk are always welcome, and that's what we wrote back. And then a telegram arrived telling us when she was due.

A lorry brought Larisa to the state farm. In the back were stowed several packing cases which she asked us to handle with care. We wondered what was inside.

It was the very thing our team needed so badly: flower seedlings.

There was also a good supply of seeds: dill, parsley, muskmelon, water-melon, cucumber, lettuce, radish and tomato.

In about two weeks we had nightshade, gillyflower and narcissus in flower, their scents blending with those of the thyme and sweetbrier that belong to the steppe.

Our vegetables were doing well too, but it was an ominously dry summer when it came. Our trees and our sprouting vegetables needed water, but the skies remained clear and the sun blazed down from morning till night, until no moisture was left in the soil. Our young trees drooped, the leaves began to shrivel, and the cucumber and water-melon tops were withering.

It was a great disappointment. We had put in so much effort, surely it could not be wasted?

Larisa suggested the way out.

"Let's cart the water here in barrels from the river," she said.

"Where will you get the time for it?" someone objected. "It's the height of the sowing season, you know, and it's all of fifteen kilometres from here to the river."

"We'll do it at night. After work."

It was no easy job to kindle enthusiasm in our tractor drivers, dead tired after a day's work. But they did rise to the emergency, and after work, without changing or resting, they drove their tractors to the river and hauled back barrels of water.

The trees came to life at once, opening out their leaves and sending up new shoots. The vegetables thrived too.

Our field camp became unrecognisable. There were flowers and trees. The walks were sprinkled with sand. The adobe-brick walls were whitewashed. It was pleasant after a day's work to relax in the shade of trees. And our meals became tastier too, we were never short of fresh cucumbers, radishes, green onion and even water-melons.

## Self-Service Shop

I remember last spring. We were out in the steppe from dawn till dark getting the fields ready for sowing, and only came back to camp for a quick meal and sleep.

Taking a trip to the main settlement to buy something was out of the question of course, but we were always running out of cigarettes, razor blades, soap, tooth paste and socks. Besides, we missed such things as sweets, biscuits, sausage, eggs, in short, an extra something besides our regular canteen meals.

"Surely a mobile shop could come here once a week at least?" Vanya Dobrynin said, talking on the subject one evening.

"That would be no help," one of the other chaps said. "Even if it did, you'd be away in the far field and miss it. Now if we had our own shop here, that would be another matter."

"Can they spare a man to run the shop especially for us? You have a hope," Dobrynin replied.

Something occurred to me then. I remembered the regional conference I had attended the year before, and the peculiar way they had of selling lemonade during the recesses. There was no salesman. Bottles of lemonade were ranged on a table and there was a tray for the money: you simply took a bottle, put the cash on the tray and helped yourself to change, counting it yourself. I told the chaps about it.

"Supposing we try it here, what do you think?" I said.

"But who'll be responsible for it?" asked Nikolai Kozlov.

"Let it be me if you like. What's the risk?"

"What if you're swindled? There are all sorts, you know," Nikolai persisted.

"Maybe there are all sorts, but not in this team. What do you say?"

I was afraid for a minute that support would not be unanimous, but finally a number of voices spoke up:

"You certainly are right."

"Go ahead with the arrangements."

"We'll have a shop at last!"

The following day, Sivenkov the Komsomol organiser and I went to the main settlement and put our plan before Nina Bolsun, the girl in charge of the general store.

"You see how it is, all you've got to do is trust us," Sivenkov said. "We'll give you a receipt for the goods, and if something goes wrong we'll be responsible."

"All right. We'll give it a try," Nina said after some thought.

Three days later we started our shop. It was in the canteen. The money had to be dropped in a money-box with a slit and change could be taken from a tray that stood beside it. The shelves were stocked with socks, soap, cigarettes, shaving cream, eau de Cologne, and paper bags of sweets, biscuits and sausage in half or a quarter kilogram lots.

Customers were not long in coming. Nikolai Kozlov, the doubting, came too. He examined the money-box to see how safe it was, dropped a twenty-kopek piece into the slit and took a spool of thread and some needles from the shelf. The first customers came in twos or threes because it felt rather strange buying in a shop like that, with no one counting your money or watching you take things down from the shelves.

All the goods were sold out in ten days. Nina Bolsun was notified. She brought a truckful of goods, opened the money-box and counted the money. It was not short a kopek.

To tell the truth, it was an anxious moment. But once everything was found to be in order we all said that it could not have been otherwise.

The experiment has proved a success. The shop is open 24 hours a day and stocks everything we need.

### **"We Hope You Like It"**

As I have already said, in the spring we had more work than we could cope with, and going back to camp for meals was not making it any easier for us.

The tractor drivers could not spare the time to go back to camp for lunch or dinner, therefore something had to be done to arrange delivery of meals to the fields.

Our cook was a girl called Maria Khizhnyak, the sister of Nikolai Khizhnyak the tractor driver. Incidentally, it was Maria who had persuaded her brother to bring his family here and settle down in the newly developed region. Maria was a good, conscientious girl, and it was her primary concern to have a hot meal always ready and waiting for the tractor drivers. And heaven help the man whose duty it was to take the food to the far fields if he was late! Maria would give him a dressing-down he would long remember, and on top of that would ask the editor of the wall newspaper to give him a "nice" write-up.

When Maria was told that meals were going to be sent out to the far fields, the first thing she did was go to the state-farm supplies manager and demand an adequate number of thermos bottles.

"My boys are not going to eat their soup cold," she said. And got all the thermos bottles she wanted.

Her assistant was Maria Kosyanenko, another energetic girl.

"Don't you think the intervals between breakfast and lunch, and lunch and dinner are a bit hard on our tractor drivers?" she said to me one day.

"There's something behind this, I suspect, what is it?"

"It's not right, that's all."

"So what do you suggest?"

"Sending out small individual parcels, say a few sandwiches and a couple of hard-boiled eggs thrown in. And on the parcel we'd write: 'We Hope You Like It,' or something."

The tractor drivers who heard her welcomed the suggestion.

Maria started the practice of sending out the parcels the very next day, and they were certainly appreciated. It was not the sandwiches as such, after all the men could have brought the same sandwiches along with them from home, it was the concern for their comfort that was so touching. They worked harder than ever after that!

The Regional Party Committee came to hear of Maria Kosyanenko's undertaking, and ordered for us in town a supply of paper bags patterned after Moscow's delicatessen stores. What we liked best about them, though, was that they had the words "We Hope You Like It" printed on them.

## **Harvest-Time**

Harvest-time was nearing, the most responsible moment in a farmer's life.

We had 4,930 hectares of wheat to harvest. When the wind stirred the tall wheat, the steppe really looked like a sea. For the forty of us to reap that fabulous harvest was out of the question of course. In response to the appeal broadcast by the Party and the Government, thousands of people—students, industrial and office workers—came out to the virgin-soil regions to help in harvest-time.

Our team received a reinforcement of 27: 6 combine operators from the Ukraine, 7 students from the Mozyr Teachers' College and 14 from the Vitebsk Medical Institute.

It was up to us to accommodate these people, provide them with bedding and food. We were already at home here, and we naturally wanted our guests to feel at home too.

I must hand it to our chaps, they really made a fine job of it. The best room in our hostel was made ready to receive the girls, and a sort of summer house was built for the boys.

A fortnight before harvesting was to begin we called a Komsomol-youth meeting. To begin with, it was decided to do the harvesting in two stages, as distinct from previous years; that is, mow the wheat, leave it in swaths until ripe, and then pick it up and thrash it.

The state farm's Party organiser, Fyodor Andreyevich Kondratko, told the meeting that the Party organisation was going to hold a meeting of the district's tractor and farming machine operators at the field camp of the Komsomol-youth team No. 3. It was an honour, and we knew we had to live up to it at all costs.

The meeting, held a few days later, was an unusual one, at which our machine operators had to give a demonstration of all our available machinery.

In harvest-time the weather was unpredictable. The sun would shine brightly one day, the next there would be pouring rain, and

the third a fog, so thick that you could not see five yards ahead of you, would smother the steppe.

It was very hard working in such "wet" conditions. Our machines frequently broke down, but we did not have to waste much time on repairs because we had put in a stock of spares in good time and were fully prepared to meet any emergency.

There was a competition on between the machine operators, just as there had been during the spring sowing campaign. The little red flags seen above the wheat looked like bright poppies from afar. I think more should be said about these little red flags.

It is simple enough to tally the work of a lathe operator or a fitter at a factory, but not so with us, agricultural workers. Usually the tractor drivers and combine operators do not know their exact showings until the tally clerk has made his measurements, which takes some time. But now that we had adopted Mamai's\* method, we had to know in the process of work if we were overfulfilling the daily norm or not. Our tally clerk made it possible for us. This is what he did: he divided the field into strips, each of which corresponded to the daily norm. A red flag was stuck into the ground to show where the strip ended, and on reaching it the tractor driver, his norm fulfilled, could attach it to his machine. Sometimes there were no flags left in the ground long before the working hours were up. The man with the best showings for the day was handed a pennant with the words: "To the Front-ranker of Mamai's Movement" inscribed on it.

At the end of the first day's harvesting, the pennant was handed to Grigory Kravtsov, who proudly attached it to his harvester. Some thought he was just lucky, but the next day he won again, and the pennant remained his for a whole week. Victor Kurchanov, a student, editor of our harvest-time bulletin, devoted one issue entirely to Grigory Kravtsov's splendid work.

In the following days the pennant kept changing hands between Kravtsov and Vladimir Solodky.

\* Nikolai Mamai is a well-known coal-hewers' team leader in Donbas. He started the movement for the overfulfilment of daily norms by every single worker.

"What the hell! They're just making fools of the rest of us! Are they using black magic or what!" Vanya Dobrynin grumbled.

"It's the magic of their work," the tally clerk said. "You could do it too, why don't you try?"

"I will too!" Vanya said challengingly.

Vanya did not come back to camp that night. I was worried and was just thinking of sending out a search party, when Maria Kostyanenko, just back from the far fields, told me everything was all right.

"Don't worry, he's pottering around his harvester. I left him a couple of sandwiches to keep going," she said.

"Look out, comrades Kravtsov and Solodky," I thought. "Our Vanya will show you what's what tomorrow."

True enough, Vanya was the first to pick up the red flag. That meant his daily norm was fulfilled.

"What's Vanya Dobrynin up to?" Larisa Solovyova, the weigher at the threshing-floor, asked me late in the afternoon.

"Why?"

"He's sent in twenty-one lorries of grain already."

"The chap's just trying hard, that's all," I said non-committally. I did not want to speak of his victory ahead of time, after all, he might still be beaten.

But Dobrynin was not beaten. At the five-minute meeting in the early morning when we usually drew up the results of the previous day and set the norms for the coming day, I gladly handed Vanya the pennant.

"Don't look so smug. I'll take it away from you, you'll see," Vitya Shibaikin told him.

Soon Vitya made his threat good, and after that the pennant kept changing hands between the four of them: Kravtsov, Solodky, Dobrynin and Shibaikin.

\* \* \*

There were fewer sunny days, the sky was overcast most of the time and more often than not it rained. We spent more days indoors. We had fixed up the largest room we had as our club of

political and agricultural education. A corner was devoted to "Mamai's Movement" where we kept newspaper files and scrapbooks with clippings from newspapers and magazines telling about the work of the best team leaders in the country. In the evenings, people could play chess, dominoes or draughts in this room, or listen to the radio.

V. I. Morozov, headmaster of the state-farm school, was in charge. He and the other speakers regularly gave talks on various subjects. On Morozov's initiative, his top-form pupils began to issue hand-written bulletins about our best workers. We called the children our patrons, which pleased them immensely.

"Why on earth are harvesters designed in such a way that they can only be used in fine weather," Nikolai Aristov voiced his thoughts aloud one rainy day. "Can't the designers invent a machine that would thrash wet ears too?"

"Go ahead and invent one," Vitya Shibaikin said.

"I certainly would if I had more education."

"Then get more education, it's not too late."

"We haven't the conditions for study, we're still living in something of a wilderness," said Sasha Kiselev.

"Don't you blame it on the wilderness," Sivenkov told him. "If you had the will you could study anywhere. And the conditions we're living in are not that bad really. We're not living in tents, are we? But even in tents people have been known to study."

"I'm not idling my time away, am I?" Kiselev flared up.

"Of course not, not quite. You're doing your job and doing it well. But you haven't enough gumption to take up study seriously."

Everyone was listening, and it was evident that many of the chaps sided with Sivenkov.

"It's high time we thought about our education in all seriousness," he said. "Now let's count, which of us has more than one trade." Sivenkov began to count on his fingers: "Vitya Shibaikin—tractor driver, combine operator and fitter; Volodya Dovzhik—tractor driver, combine operator, fitter, mason, carpenter...." Sivenkov's ten fingers soon ran out.

"Not bad at all," he said. "Now let's ask these chaps if they needed any special sort of 'conditions' to learn their trades. I believe that every one of us could easily learn a second trade, and those who know two—learn a third or a fourth."

There and then we elected four people to send to the District School of Mechanics.

... The weather turned really foul. We just managed to finish harvesting before the first frost set in. Although the odds against us were heavy, we did not leave any wheat in the fields at all. Our showings for that year were: 15 centners of grain per every one of the 4,930 hectares cultivated by our team, and sold to the state a total of 385,219 poods of grain. This was 100,000 poods over and above plan and almost double the amount for 1956 which was a bumper-crop year.

## Our Charges

In 1957, our team received a bonus of 3,000 rubles for the spring sowing campaign. We all got together to decide what we should buy with the money. Some suggested buying skis for the whole team, and others thought a good radio set would be the best thing for all of us (we did not have one then). My suggestion was to give the money to a children's home.

Perhaps the reason why everyone approved was because some of our tractor drivers—Leonid Panfilov, Leonid Tretyakov and Nikolai Khizhnyak—had themselves been brought up in children's homes, having lost their parents in the war, or perhaps it was simply that we all loved children.

We decided to send the money to the Pervomaisky Children's Home for girls. We wrote to them about ourselves and our work and asked them to accept the money and buy whatever they needed.

A reply came by return post. The girls thanked us for the money and told us about themselves. We began to correspond regularly. In one of the letters the girls told us that they were dreaming of starting a sewing workshop of their own. We decided to help them. We did some outside work in our spare time

and sent them the money we got for it. Before long, we heard from them that their sewing workshop was ready and they were already learning to sew. Do you know what a nice feeling it gave us?

The Children's Home invited our team to come and spend March 8—International Women's Day—with them. We sent a delegation of three: Victor Sivenkov, Vanya Dobrynin and Leonid Panfilov with presents from our team for the girls who were at the top of their school classes. Before leaving, our delegates insistently begged the girls to come and visit us.

And they did. Twenty of them.

They stayed with us for three days to our mutual enjoyment. They gave us a song and dance show, which was afterwards repeated at the main settlement. Also, they brought souvenirs they had embroidered or stitched themselves for members of our team.

We next sent our charges a good collection of books and several table-tennis sets.

That was several months ago. Soon we are going to pay a visit to our children's home again. This time, we want to see how they are acquiring a trade and, if we can, help them in this.

\* \* \*

The Order of Lenin was conferred on our region for achievements in crop farming, but in livestock breeding we stood last. And it was bothering us.

The Seven-Year Plan (1959-65) envisages a more than ten-fold increase in production of meat by the end of 1965. To achieve this, reliable feed resources are needed, and in this respect the value of maize, a nourishing and cheap fodder, cannot be overestimated.

And so we put our heads together and decided that it would be a good idea if our charges undertook to plant different sorts of maize in a plot of ground as an experiment to find out which sort and which method of tending were best suited to our soil and climate.

We put it up to the teachers and girls of the children's home and they approved the plan. I told the girls that the plot of ground would be a special kind of research laboratory and they themselves would be scientific workers. They applauded the idea noisily.

Together with Raisa Afanasyeva, the principal of the children's home, and Anton Pavlovsky, the supplies manager, we took a trip to the Tretya Pyatiletka collective farm to speak to the chairman and board. As a rule, the children's home pitched its summer camp on the bank of the Ishim close to the collective farm, and we wanted to know if the board could spare a plot of ground for the maize experiment.

The board thought the undertaking worthwhile and allotted a plot of ground for the experiment which practically adjoined the summer-camp grounds.

We also went to the Kalinin collective farm, another neighbour, and asked the board if they could supply the seeds. They gladly promised to help the children all they could.

That same evening, at a meeting we held at the children's home, the maize-experimenting team was elected from the eighth- and ninth-form girls. Ivan Dynichenko, our agronomist and seed breeder, offered to teach the girls agricultural techniques.

On behalf of our team I challenged the young maize growers to compete with us, and wished them in due course to earn the title of Communist Work Team.

In their answering speeches the girls said that they were accepting my challenge and would try their hardest to justify the hopes we were placing in them.



*Kim Kostenko*

HOW  
**THE YOUNG GUARD  
FOUGHT AND DIED**

**(Some New Facts About the Krasnodon  
Underground Komsomol Organisation)**

In July 1942, Hitler's armies seized the town of Krasnodon in the Ukraine. An orgy of arrest and execution began at once. One day the Hitlerites staged a public execution of thirty people, burying them alive in graves they first had to dig for themselves. Among the victims was a young woman with a baby in her arms. One of the crowd watching this atrocious crime was Oleg Koshevoi, a sixteen-year-old boy, a Komsomol member. He swore vengeance on the German occupants. He had friends he could trust among the boys and girls of Krasnodon who supported his plan, and, with the approval and help of the local underground Party organisation, they formed the "Young Guard", whose

heroism soon became known all over the world and earned undying glory. They waged a valiant struggle on enemy-occupied territory, helping the partisans by procuring weapons, ammunition and medicines for them; they blew up vehicles carrying German officers, they exterminated traitors and rescued Soviet citizens from being driven to hard labour in fascist Germany. With the four radio sets they owned, the Young Guards regularly listened to the Soviet Information Bureau broadcasts and kept the people of Krasnodon in touch with the true state of affairs on the fighting fronts. They fitted up a press and printed leaflets rousing the people to fight the enemy. Alexander Fadeyev, the well-known Soviet writer, has told about the life and struggle of the young Krasnodon patriots in his book the *Young Guard*. Since Fadeyev's death in 1956, new documents relating to the murder of the Young Guards have come to light. They form the subject of the present story, published originally in the newspaper *Komsomolskaya Pravda*.

\* \* \*

The day the first leaflet signed with the short but proud name "The Young Guard" appeared in town, the entire Krasnodon police force was alerted. The Hitlerites scoured the town, suspecting everyone, but despite all their investigating they could not get on the track of the brave youngsters who had dared to challenge the Nazi occupants. In the meantime, more and more things were happening: someone hoisted a red flag on the pit head of Colliery No. 1-bis, someone attacked the sentries guarding the war prisoners' camp, someone planted a mine in the road leading to Lugansk. A German motor transport column, carrying ammunition, touched it off and for two days afterwards explosions were heard on the outskirts of the town.

One grey autumn morning, the chief of the German regional police, Ernst Emil Renatus, arrived at the Krasnodon district gendarmerie. The small, stout man with a huge, round belly tightly encircled with a broad leather belt darted about the room, shouting and furiously banging the table with his fist.

You bungling fools! You can't even catch a bunch of kids! To the front line with all of you! To Stalingrad!" he raged and stormed.

Solikovsky, the chief of the local police, who had been urgently summoned to the gendarmerie, stood at attention in a far corner and gazed at his superior with servile eagerness to do his bidding. Renatus dashed up to him, jerked him forward by a button on his uniform, and hissed malevolently into his face in foul Russian:

"I give you three days, understand? *Drei Tagen*," he thrust three pudgy fingers, covered with reddish bristles, into Solikovsky's face. "If the partisans are not found. . . ."

Renatus showed by gestures how he would tie a noose round Solikovsky's neck and jerk him up.

That same day the commandants of all the districts were called to the town police for an emergency conference. Playing with his whip which he carried with him day and night, Solikovsky repeated word for word what Renatus had said, adding a string of threats and oaths for good measure.

"I'll flog you to death, you vermin, if you don't produce whoever wrote that leaflet. You'll bring them here dead or alive!"

Having received their instructions and warning, the polizeis were dismissed. Podtynny, the commandant of the Pervomaika village, started for the door together with the others.

"Wait, you. . ." Solikovsky indicated him with his whip.

Taking out a pack of cheap German cigarettes, Solikovsky lit one in a leisurely fashion, inhaled deeply two or three times, and then looked searchingly into Podtynny's eyes.

"Weren't you an officer in the Red Army?" he asked.

"Yawohl! Yes sir," Podtynny answered with a smart click of his heels.

"So you've had training, you've had your sniff of gunpowder already. . . . They're a scoundrelly lot," Solikovsky waved scornfully at the door. "They'll run like rats at the first shot. And this sounds like a fight. Understand? We're not going to handle this in gloves, strong action is indicated. The Pervomaika partisans are particularly active. They've got to be given a good shaking up. Clear enough? If you're successful you'll get a reward."

Later, when Podtynny was being tried by a Soviet court of justice, he confessed:

"I did my best. We searched the whole village. Those we suspected we brought to the police station. We beat them up to make them admit connection with the partisans. Special squads of polizeis patrolled the streets day and night. At night we arranged ambushes at the crossroads in the hope of catching whoever was sticking the leaflets on the walls. But it was no use. We did not succeed in catching the Young Guards."

One of the polizeis, who had sat in ambush all night, came to the police station in the morning to report that nothing had happened during his watch. Podtynny dismissed him with a weary wave: "All right, go and sleep." But when the man had turned to go, Podtynny saw a small piece of paper stuck to his back, with the following written on it in large script: "Flunkies, you're trying in vain. You'd better worry about saving your own hides. The people will take ruthless revenge on traitors." It was signed: "Young Guard."

The three days Renatus had given them were up long ago. In fact, it was nearer a fortnight. Renatus rang up Krasnodon practically every morning, threatening to shoot everyone for their inactivity. Solikovsky raged and ranted.

But the Young Guards were not to be caught. . . .

It was an ill-fated day when Moshkov, Zemnukhov and Tretyakevich were caught stealing the German soldiers' Xmas gifts, though none of the polizeis had the slightest notion that they were holding three of the most active members of the Komsomol underground organisation. Lots of young fellows were hauled in for minor offences in those days, and so the polizeis took no particular notice of the three.

"Keep them in the cooler for a few days, give them a good flogging and send them packing. The cells are crowded as it is," Solikovsky ordered when the case was reported to him.

Not one of the three boys betrayed the existence of the underground organisation by so much as a word. Later, when the Red

Army entered Krasnodon, investigator Kuleshov of the local police, who was seized at once, stated during his trial that it was Tretyakevich who, unable to stand the beatings, had betrayed the "Young Guard". This was a lie, apparently intended to give the real traitor a chance to make a getaway. Actually, as has been proved by further investigation, the polizeis had obtained the names of the Young Guards from quite a different source.

The day Moshkov, Zemnukhov and Tretyakevich were to be released, the superintendent of Colliery No. 1-bis called on the chief of the district gendarmerie, Hauptwachtmeister Sonns.

"I have the honour of handing you this document which I believe will interest you," the superintendent said, putting on the desk before the chief a page, torn from an exercise book, covered with a small, hasty handwriting.

Here is the exact text of the informer's vile message which opened the tragic chapters in the history of the valiant "Young Guard".

"To the Superintendent of Colliery No. 1-bis. I tracked down the underground youth organisation and became one of its members. Now that I have found out the names of the leaders, I am writing you this statement. Please come to my house and I shall tell you all the details. My address is: Chkalov Street No. 12, first doorway, the tenant of the flat is Vasily Grigoryevich Gromov. Gennady Pocheptsov (signature)."

The Judas who wrote this note was a boy of the same age as many of the Young Guards and a friend of theirs. They went to the same school. Everyone knew Gennady for a quiet, inconspicuous sort whose home life was rather unfortunate. Having lost his father as a child, Gennady lived with his stepfather, an avaricious, spiteful and irascible man. When the question of admitting Gennady to the underground organisation came up for discussion, none of them voted against him. He was not given any important jobs to do at first, but he attended the staff meetings

and knew many of the Young Guards personally, including Oleg Koshevoi, Ulyana Gromova, Ivan Zemnukhov and Sergei Tyulenin, who were members of the staff.

Vasily Gromov knew about his stepson's connection with the underground organisation, and when rumour spread through the village that Moshkov, Tretyakevich and Zemnukhov had been arrested by the police, he said to Gennady: "So their game is up! Your pals have been locked up and you, too, will be roped in soon. Before it's too late, go and tell all you know. The Germans will pay you well for it. Ask them for a cow, but perhaps they'll even give you a house...."

Gennady's shabby, cowardly soul had been unable to withstand this very first test. To save his own hide, he betrayed those who thought him a friend.

Zhukov, the superintendent of the Colliery to whom Gennady delivered the note, did not go to Gromov's address himself. Instead, he handed it to Sonns who sent it to Solikovsky by safe hand.

Gennady Pocheptsov was put under arrest. However, he did not remain locked up very long. That same evening, Solikovsky himself courteously flung open the door for him and shook his hand long and gratefully in parting.

Podtynny was entrusted with the job of arresting all the "Young Guard" members named by Gennady.

That starless, frosty night, a reinforced squad of fascists headed by Podtynny set out on its gruesome business down the deserted streets of Pervomaika. Working on the list of addresses supplied by Gennady, Podtynny and three German soldiers would enter a house, knock down their victim, bind him hand and foot, drag him outside and throw him into the waiting sledge. The business over in a matter of minutes, the procession would move on to the next address.

The first to be arrested that night was Tonya Ivanikhina. She was dragged out of bed and not even given a chance to dress. In her nightgown she was carted round the village in an open sledge till daybreak. The next to be seized was Anatoly Popov, leader of the Pervomaika group, and then Sasha Bondareva, Boris

Glavan, Maya Peglivanova, Demyan Fomin.... There were eighteen boys and girls delivered to the police station the next morning.

Simultaneously, arrests were going on in the town proper. The four cells available at the police station were packed to capacity.

The nightmare began.

To make the Young Guards talk, the Hitlerites resorted to torture more brutal and inhuman than anything ever invented by the Inquisition. They came to the cells and beat them, tortured them during questioning, and lashed them with whips in the corridors. The fascists tried to outdo one another in inventing unheard-of tortures. The walls, furniture and even the ceiling in Solikovsky's office, where the interrogation usually took place, were spattered with blood.

It makes one's blood run cold to read the record of court proceedings in which testimony was given by the fascist murderers to the inhuman tortures inflicted on the Young Guards during interrogation. Here are a few excerpts:

"I stood guard outside the cells where the Komsomol members were kept. They came back from the investigating officers with bruised, swollen faces. They could hardly stand; they were dragged along the corridor and into the cells. I refused to give them even a drink of water when they came up to the door and asked, with parched lips, to let them quench their unbearable thirst....

"During interrogation we beat them savagely with whips and lengths of telegraph wire. Besides, to make the Young Guards talk, we used to hang them up by the neck to the top of the window frame in Solikovsky's office, staging a mock execution by hanging. That is the way we interrogated Moshkov, Lukashev, Popov, Zhukov, and eight girls whose names I don't remember...."

*"Question:* Who of the Young Guards were subjected to beatings at the police station?

*"Answer:* All members of the Young Guard organisation without exception were subjected to torture."

From evidence by Podtynny:

"In my capacity as deputy chief of the town police, I often went into Solikovsky's office. I saw the way he and the investigating officer questioned the 'Young Guard' prisoners, who in the course of interrogation were savagely beaten with whips, rubber hose, wire...."

Podtynny personally interrogated Sergei Tyulenin, one of the staunchest and most fearless of the Young Guards. Reading the documents and the evidence gives one a vivid picture of the interrogation.

... The guards pushed the pale, bleeding boy into Solikovsky's office. His bruised, lacerated body showed through the shreds of shirt left clinging to it.

With a look at Sergei, Podtynny took a large gulp from a wine glass standing on the table, strode up to him and, taking a swing, crashed his fist into the boy's face. Sergei swayed but kept his feet and leaned against the wall.

"Are you going to talk?" Podtynny snarled.

Sergei shook his head.

The whip whistled and came down again and again, raising angry red belts on Sergei's shoulder. The boy remained silent.

"Let her in," Solikovsky ordered the soldier at the door.

The door creaked open. Two polizeis led in Sergei's mother, Alexandra Vasilyevna Tyulenina. At the sight of her son, the mother turned chalk white, and a shudder shook her.

"Here, take a look at your bastard," Podtynny said with a sneer. "He won't talk. Maybe you'll make him talk?"

Alexandra Vasilyevna did not take her silent stare off her son. One of the soldiers who had led her in pushed her forward, and the other took a swing with his whip.

Mustering his remaining strength, Sergei darted forward to his mother, but two hefty guards squashed him back to the wall.

"You swine, you dirty swine," Sergei whispered with quivering lips.

A brutal kick sent him sprawling, and blows came raining down on his body again.

Crazed with the horror of it, the mother collapsed on the floor and hugged Podtynny's legs.

"Let him go, please let him go. . . ."

"Mother, don't! Don't dare beg!" Sergei shouted.

Obeying his command, she slowly got to her feet, made the sign of the cross and stood motionless by the wall. She watched her son being tortured with eyes that expressed and saw nothing.

Relieved that his mother had understood and obeyed him, Sergei smiled for the first time in all those ghastly days.

With that smile on his face Sergei endured all the tortures inflicted on him by the fascists in their maniacal fury. He smiled when they pushed four thick needles under his finger-nails to the very eyes. He smiled when they crushed his legs with the door, and when they seared the palms of his hands with white-hot irons.

They tortured him for two hours. Podtynny asked him for the last time: "Are you going to talk?"

Sergei shook his head fiercely: "No!"

While they were dragging him out of the room, he fainted.

You will remember in Alexander Fadeyev's *Young Guard* how Tonya Ivanikhina, the youngest of the Young Guards, admitted frankly to her friends that she was terribly afraid of torture, that she would die rather than say anything of course, but she was terribly afraid....

Tonya was a frail and highly-strung girl. She could not stand the sight of blood, it terrified her.

The fascists tried to get at Tonya through this fear of hers. She was always brought in for questioning last. By that time, Solikovsky's office would be like a slaughter house, and the Hitlerites like blood-spattered butchers. There would be blood all over the place....

Tonya would walk into the room and, gingerly avoiding the puddles of blood, approach the table. Raising her large eyes she

would stare straight into the investigator's face. That look of hers held everything: hatred, dismay, loathing. . . . Everything but fear.

They beat her terribly. One of the fascists broke in three of her ribs, kicking her savagely with the toe of his heavy boot. Tonya fainted. They dashed water over her, and when she came to there was the same look of hatred and loathing in her eyes. The SS-man, who had been specially sent by Renatus to make them talk, was maddened by that look and, picking up a red-hot iron, he made two stabs at the girl's face. Tonya went blind the day before the execution.

And this is how the hangmen themselves described the questioning of Anatoly Popov.

Anatoly was the strongest young fellow in Pervomaika. This the polizeis learned the night they came to seize him. It took four of them to overpower Anatoly.

As a safety measure, they tied his hands when taking him in for questioning the first time. It was not until he was on the verge of physical collapse from the beatings that they risked untying his hands.

Solikovsky himself conducted the interrogation.

"Think better of it now? Name your accomplices!" Solikovsky would shout again and again, bending over the prostrate figure.

"You scum! I'm sorry we didn't kill you earlier. Never mind, others will," Anatoly would reply.

They tried strangling him by putting a noose round his neck and attaching the end of the rope to the window handle, they tried crushing his fingers in the door jamb. At last, when all their methods of torture had been tried on him, Solikovsky came close to Anatoly, who was breathing laboriously, and repeated his question. For answer, Anatoly kicked him. Blind with rage, Solikovsky seized a German sword that was lying on the table and slashed at Anatoly's leg.

That day, January 15, 1943, was Anatoly's nineteenth birthday. When he came to after the tortures he had endured, he wrote with his own blood on a scrap of paper someone in the cell had procured: "Wish me a happy birthday, Mother. Don't cry, dry your tears."

One of the policeis, a neighbour of the Popovs, agreed to deliver the note to Anatoly's mother. He rapped on her window pane late at night and whispered: "Hurry, go to the police station, maybe you'll be in time to say good-bye."

Anatoly's mother, Taisia Prokofyevna, ran to the police station as fast as her legs would carry her. It was a moonlit night. When she got almost as far as the police station, she saw the gates being flung open and a covered lorry driving out. It went at full speed in the direction of Colliery No. 5. Voices, muted by the tarpaulin, were singing a song. Young, husky voices were singing Lenin's favourite song:

*The victim of dire bondage,  
He died a glorious death*

One of the voices Taisia Prokofyevna recognised as her son's.

They were being taken to their death.

For all their refined methods of torture, the fascist hangmen did not get a single word out of the Young Guards. They did not wrench from them a moan or a cry for mercy. The young patriots endured the torture staunchly. They preferred death to treachery.

"The overwhelming majority of the Young Guards behaved with dignity during the questioning. In spite of the beatings, they stoically refused to betray their comrades," the hangmen frankly admitted.

And as stoically they met their death.

"I once escorted a group of Young Guards to the place of execution," Podtynny said at the trial. "I saw the criminal investigator shoot point-blank at the Young Guards with his Mauser pistol, after which they were thrown down into the pit. During the shooting, the Young Guards behaved manfully, with dignity, and not one of them begged for mercy."

The materials pertaining to the judicial inquest into the case of Podtynny include a copy of Drewitz's testimony, an S.S. officer who worked in the gendarmerie in Rovenki during the Nazi occupation. It was here that Oleg Koshevoi, the leader of the "Young Guard", and Lyuba Shevtsova, the fearless liaison officer of the underground organisation, were put to death.

Drewitz describes their execution with cynical frankness.

"Having placed the prisoners on the edge of the large pit that had been dug in the park beforehand, we shot them all. I noticed that Koshevoi was still alive, he was merely wounded. I went up to Koshevoi, who was lying on the ground, and shot point-blank at his head.

"Among the second lot of prisoners we shot I remember Shevtsova best. I noticed her because of her looks. She had a beautiful, slim body and an oval face. I myself took Shevtsova to the edge of the pit to be shot. She did not utter a word of entreaty and met death calmly, with head held high...."

The murderers who had steeped their hands in the blood of our country's best sons and daughters did not escape vengeance. The sword of Soviet justice severely punished the cowards and traitors, all those who servilely obeyed the will of their fascist masters, who committed atrocities against the heroes of Krasnodon.

An impressive memorial to the fallen heroes of the "Young Guard" has been erected in the old shady park in the centre of Krasnodon. There are always fresh flowers lying at the foot. People come here from all over the Soviet Union to pay tribute to the memory of the courageous boys and girls who had loved their Motherland and their people so devotedly.

They gave their lives for their people's happiness, and immortality is theirs.



feel I simply must begin this story by addressing an appeal to all the skeptics still peopling this world.

Dear gloomy people, if you would care to experience that feeling called joy, if you have not yet forgotten what a good, jolly smile looks like, come to Moscow at once, take trolley No. 4 and go to the house in Lenin Avenue which has a sign over the entrance: U.S.S.R. Academy of Sciences, Institute of Precision Mechanics and Calculating Equipment. Don't frown, dear skeptics,

do take the trip, what you will encounter there is youth, and you will break into a smile in spite of yourselves....

\* \* \*

A pass was made out for me in less than a minute, and I was shown the way to the office of the academic secretary, Irma Vasilyevna Vipper. I took the chair she offered me and cast a casual glance out of the window. I saw the street along which I had just come, but I had had too close a view of it before to really appreciate its beauty with the spick and span new trolleys, the endless parks and huge blocks of new apartment houses striding away into the distance.

"Good enough to paint?" Irma Vasilyevna asked me. "You ought to have come here seven years ago when our institute first moved in. The building stood amid green meadows and wild flowers. That is in summer of course. In spring and autumn there were such rivers of mud here, that you could not get across even in waders. And look at it now! Incidentally, there is something symbolic in this: our young institute, which is only ten years old, moving into this youngest district of Moscow, into one of its very first buildings, to take up the youngest science there is, a science which is only a little older than the institute. It was here that the first electronic computer in the country was born, our BESM\* which is exactly four years old today. And the people who...."

"I beg your pardon. Irma old girl, did you ring up the designing office?"

The man who had come in was very young, about the same age as the academic secretary.

"I'll do it later, it's too early," Irma said in some embarrassment.

"Please don't take this down," she said on seeing me jot something down in my notebook. "I'm the academic secretary after all, and 'old girl' doesn't sound too dignified. It will make people laugh. You see, ours is rather a peculiar institute. Everyone

\* BESM stands for: Big Electronic Computer (in Russian).

is very young. That was Burtsev who just came in, you've heard of him I expect. He's 32. He sat for his candidate's degree a little while ago, but instead he was awarded a doctorate. At 29 he was awarded the Order of Lenin for working on the BESM. Our average age here is 30. Burtsev is considered pretty old. . . ."

Later I met some of the other scientists and engineers. Their youth was difficult to get used to, but it went wonderfully with their achievements. The BESM is called a "thinking", an "intelligent" machine: this calculator is a real miracle worker. In a matter of seconds it can solve mathematical problems that would take a man years to do, it can do translations, and even play chess. And the people who had designed and built it, who were they, what were they like?

"Just a moment," Irma said. "I think that's Volkov's voice outside, shall I call him in?" She went out and closed the door behind her, but I caught her words: "Hey, Yevgeny, come here quick!"

She assumed a formal tone when introducing him: Yevgeny Alexeyevich Volkov, senior research worker, candidate of physical and mathematical sciences.

The thirty-year-old scientist stood smiling shyly and nervously. Would they keep him long? Maybe they'd like to talk to someone else instead? Or maybe they could put off the interview? He asked these questions with his eye on the door. He clearly wanted to get away.

There was the imprint of youth on everything here, in all things large and small. And gradually I began to understand precisely why it was our young people who had helped to design and build our first electronic computer, applying their knowledge of a science that was young too. It had taken daring, which only the young are capable of. They had worked on the idea, forgetful of sleep and rest, undaunted by hardships, they had studied, experimented with their daring designs, accumulating the experience they lacked in the process, and had finally created the BESM. They had taken in their stride such things as sleepless nights, and days spent in the laboratory without a break.

I was told in confidence, which I cannot help betraying, that the director of the institute himself, Academician Lebedev, called his young scientists by their first names and treated them without any formality at all.

Irma Vasilyevna and I were standing in the corridor. A group of research workers walked past with quick, determined steps, loudly arguing about something, gesticulating and laughing. A thin, fair-haired young man with keen, laughing eyes came running down the stairs, taking three steps at a time.

"That's Mark Tyapkin," Irma Vasilyevna told me. "Everyone adores him. He's the chief engineer. He was awarded the Order of the Red Banner of Labour for the BESM. He was 27 then, he's 30 now."

\* \* \*

"I simply don't have a life story, you see," Mark Tyapkin told me. "That's all there is to it. Perhaps the most memorable event in my student days at the Moscow Power Institute was putting my name down among those wishing to learn a new speciality: automatic and computing machinery. The new always fascinated me. I listened to the lectures open-mouthed with admiration. I did not know then that many of the subjects taught would be of no use to us in practice. The professors themselves were not quite sure at first what lectures to read to the students taking up the new speciality. However, I understood the main thing: all sciences have been dictated by people's practical needs, and therefore they have to serve the people and make their lives easier. But I did not know how to go about it in practice...."

The time came for him to consider his future diploma paper. For his practical training Mark was assigned to this institute in 1951, to this very building in fact. Work had just begun on the BESM, and it was suggested to Mark to devote himself to the drum. What was a drum anyway? His knowledge of electronics was very vague at the time, and of an electronic computer's "memory" even more so. But the drum *was* the machine's "memory". The entire surface was covered with the substance magnetic tape is made of. This compound, it appeared, stored the

numbers which enabled the machine to provide the correct answers. Mark examined the drum, and found that it had eighty magnetic heads, eighty amplifiers, and eighty counters. In short, it was like eighty tape recorders combined in one. Mark did not know what was what yet, but the thought struck him: "Why eighty? Why not less? Construction would be cheaper, and say if we had one amplifier for all the eighty heads, the machine would be eighty times more reliable."

To solve the problem he had to polish up all the knowledge he had gained at the institute, and not merely theoretical but as applicable in practice. And this meant studying anew. The weeks that followed were a strain on Mark, he grew thin and haggard, but for the first time in his life he experienced the urge of creation, a passionate desire to succeed or die in the effort. His fellow students, who were also assigned to the institute, offered him their advice, help was given him by the older engineers already working on computing machines, and by Academician Lebedev himself. Finally, the problem of the drum was solved. Mark's colleagues insist that all the honour is due to him alone, but Mark honestly believes it was a collective endeavour because no man alone could possibly invent even the tiniest and simplest of the "screws" in a machine as complex as the BESM.

Mark has been working here ever since his graduation.

"He's an amazingly hard-working chap," people say of him. "I wonder if he has ever had a night's sleep? He always found time to help his comrades too although he was falling asleep on his feet...."

"He's a very capable engineer," others say.

This "capable engineer" of 30 still goes leaping down the stairs, taking three steps at a time, he is still as keen on skating as ever, and he still loves to play a practical joke on one of his friends whenever he gets the chance. No, he has not changed much outwardly, but his thinking has become more profound, his reasoning more mature, and his knowledge has sharpened and solidified. I am not a specialist in computing technique, I am sorry to say, and so I shall not venture to explain the nature of the changes that have taken place in Mark's knowledge. But this is what his

colleagues said about him, their opinion was unanimous, and so I think my readers can trust it just as I had done:

"Mark Tyapkin is a gifted man. Working on the BESM has been a sort of university for Mark and his fellow graduates, it made them what they are. Our institute has produced a whole galaxy of gifted engineers and scientists."

\* \* \*

### Do you know this old legend?

There is a high diamond cliff. It takes four days to scale, four days to walk around it to the right, four days to the left. Once in a thousand years a bird alights on the top of the cliff to clean its beak. When the bird has worn down the cliff completely, a second of eternity will have passed....

It frightens you to think that our life is so short compared with eternity. Little wonder then that it has ever been mankind's fervent and constant dream to prolong life, to stretch a minute of a mortal's life to decades.

This may sound strange and out of place, but actually it has a direct bearing on the BESM, on all that our scientists and engineers are doing, on the very purpose for which this particular institute exists.

I was asked: how many mathematical problems have to be solved before exploitation of an ordinary oil field can begin? To be on the safe side, I blurted out: a hundred million. It transpired, however, that it was only a thousand. The next question was: how long will it take a man to solve the thousand problems? I said: one day. It's no use guessing whether it's a month, a year, or ten years, because the answer is five millenniums.

And with the BESM it is only a few hours. Anyone who is willing to take the trouble is welcome to work out how much time this machine has saved man, or, in other words, how many years it has added to the span of man's life in terms of working capacity.

Since time immemorial, scholars have been trying to find a quicker way of solving mathematical problems. The solution of

each problem means more oil, more metal, silk, synthetic rubber, farming machinery, grain, meat—in other words—life. John Napier, the Scottish mathematician, spent twenty years of his life inventing the system of logarithms, employing which he then increased his working capacity twentyfold for the remainder of his years.

The electronic computer needs but a few hours to do what normally would take several generations. It is truly unbelievable, it is as difficult to imagine as the infiniteness of the universe, and yet it is a fact. The working capacity of a second has been increased beyond calculation.

To invent this electronic brain, people had to get to the top of a tall staircase, each step of which was marked with numerous inventions and discoveries of the past. Counting on the fingers, on pebbles, on knots, on dice.... Then came Napier's logarithms and the first arithmetical machine invented by Blaise Pascal in 1642, and after that Hahn's machine, and the arithmetical machines of Thomas and Chebyshev, Charles Babbage's first automatic calculator, Hollerith's tabulator and, finally, the electronic computing machine, invented a mere ten years ago. It was such a "clever" machine that it virtually took a load off the human mind.

Mark Tyapkin asked me if I would like to take a look at the BESM, and naturally I gladly accepted.

\* \* \*

Alas, the machine did not impress me as I imagined it would. I actually felt rather cheated. I followed Mark into the holy of holies with a fast beating heart, recalling all the things he had told me about the wonder machine.

It was here that mathematicians had actually jumped for joy when they got their first answers to their age-old problems. It was here that scientists and engineers had stood spellbound when the BESM produced its first translation from English into Russian. Suddenly there had been a hitch in the smooth working of the machine, everyone rushed to check and see what was

wrong. But nothing had really been wrong: it had simply stopped to "think over" the strange and unpleasant words "cold war", evidently annoyed that people were bothering it with such an unnecessary combination of words. After that, the machine had "come to", resuming its former speed and efficiency. I was told of this strange and quite inexplicable incident by many of those who had actually witnessed it.

"If you're going to write about it, don't forget to put the word 'think' in quotes," I was asked. "For heaven's sake don't let your readers imagine that our machine is really a thinking creature, that it can take the place of human brains. The comparison with the human brain is very crude and conditional, we only draw it to make the working of the machine easier to understand. Take memorising cells, for instance. The machine has thousands, well, hundreds of thousands. But the human cortex has fifteen thousand million. The machine has neither will power nor character, it can neither love nor hate. It can only solve problems but never invent them, as the great Einstein said. So make sure you don't forget the quotes."

I remembered all that, but going into the holy of holies I simply could not get rid of the feeling that I was about to see something staggering, a machine that could think, and quotes be damned.

And what did I see? Before me stood the BESM. No, it didn't. It was I who stood before it. To my right there were huge cabinets, taking up the entire wall space from the floor to the ceiling, with thousands of lamps flickering dimly behind glass. To my left, there was a cabinet where the numbers were stored; the "memory" of the BESM was kept in three such cabinets, but where the other two were I didn't know. The programming unit was in the next room, the control console in the third, and the unit recording the results was in the fourth. How it all interacted was a mystery to me.

The floor trembled ever so slightly, there was a sort of buzzing or rather a hum in the room, tiny lights went on and off, and a measured tapping came from one of the units. There were three or four very young girls standing in the middle of the room,

"Meet our mathematicians," Mark said to me. I was startled because the word mathematician always conjured up for me the image of an old, bearded sage. There was also a young man in glasses, who looked like a student, sitting on a stool a little apart from the girl-mathematicians, reading a book. In his fingers he was twirling an ordinary screw-driver. "That's our commander-in-chief, the shift engineer," Mark said to me in a whisper.

It was both disappointing and puzzling, not the BESM as such, but the whole atmosphere. Where were the white-coated high priests? Where was the grandeur and solemnity?

"You mustn't forget the machine is already four years old," Mark said. "This is routine work."

Yes, of course. Just then the machine was doing a piece of ordinary routine work. It was making the calculations for a new electric power station. A mistake of one centimetre in the slope of the dam might involve a tremendous amount of unnecessary earth-moving work, yet the whole calculation took no more than twenty seconds. A man would have taken a month or more to do it. In a matter of seconds the electronic computer will work out the orbits of small planets, make the most economic calculations for a bridge construction, the shape of an airplane wing and the nozzle of a jet engine, give the weather forecast, and generally lighten the work of economists, accountants, physicists and others.

Yes, this is routine. The calculator is four years old already, and now it has put on its overalls, so to say, rolled up its sleeves and got down to real work. Its exhibition days are over. It is in the van of our advance today, faithfully serving the interests of our national economy.

Nor is it the only one in our country. We already have several major computing centres in the Ukraine, in Byelorussia, in Georgia, and in Siberia. There are several types of electronic computers designed by Soviet engineers and scientists—the "Strela", the MESM, the M-2, and others, and the money they are saving our economy runs into millions of rubles. To think that the operations performed by these machines in 1955 alone would have taken ten thousand skilled workers as many as twenty years!

I wondered what the institute would have in store for us tomorrow. At the word "tomorrow" a dreamy stare would come into the eyes of the young scientists, and then they would start up, eager to get back to their work. "You must forgive us," they'd say. "Let's put off the rest of this interview. We're pressed for time, you know. We have a lot of calculations to make, we've got to squeeze a hundred years into one day because what is done here in a day would have taken man a hundred years to do."

If anyone tells you that electronic computers, having first made the necessary calculations, can operate the turbogenerators of electric power stations, do not doubt that it is true. Or that they can drive trains and pilot planes. Or that an earth satellite is equipped with an electronic automaton. If anyone tells you that soon there will be automatic factories, working on atomic energy and mining their own minerals, you may well believe even that!

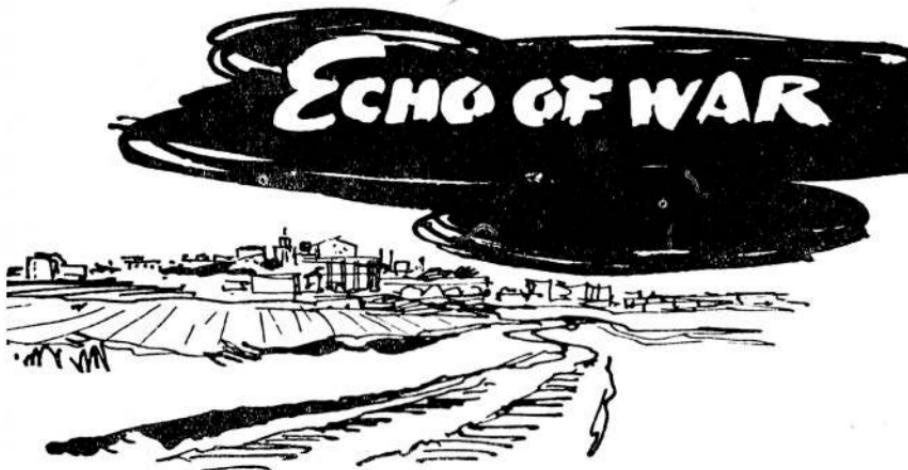
My advice to anyone who does not believe in this is to get into trolley No. 4 and go to the house in Lenin Avenue, to the building which has the sign over the door: U.S.S.R. Academy of Sciences, Institute of Precision Mechanics and Calculating Equipment.

There he will encounter youth.

And youth will certainly make dreams come true.



*Arkady Sakhnin*



In October 1957, the inhabitants of the Kirov District of Kursk were staggered by the rumour that a mine and a high-explosive shell had been found by the railway crossing near the entrance to the gypsum factory, planted there by persons unknown. Everyone began to talk about it at once, as though the rumour had crashed down on the district from above and had needed no time to spread.

The town's youngsters, those ubiquitous know-all's, insisted that there were ten shells and not one, and some declared that there were not ten either, but fifty-three at least.

Reinforced details of militia and a patrol of soldiers appeared in the vicinity of the gypsum factory. Motor traffic was diverted from the railway crossing. By nightfall the restricted area was extended: no cars or pedestrians were allowed to use the adjoining streets.

The authorities saw that the inhabitants of the Kirov District had to have their fears calmed but it could not be done because the threatening disaster far surpassed even the youngsters' vivid imagination.

Fifteen men met in the director's office at the gypsum factory. Among them were Party and local administration workers, Lieut.-Col. Bugayev, the commandant of Kursk, and the directors of the other factories in the vicinity. All Col. Diasamidze, commanding the bomb-disposal unit, could say in answer to their anxious questions was that his men were making an investigation of what exactly was buried in the ground, but until they knew for certain there was nothing to tell. He instructed them as to what urgent safety measures should be taken and asked them all to leave the office which was about twenty metres away from the danger spot.

The only people to remain behind were Col. Diasamidze, Lieut.-Col. Bugayev and two army engineers. After discussing the situation they called in Capt. Gorelik, First Lieut. Porotikov and Lieut. Ivashchenko to help. Reconnaissance began.

Before long, the shape and size of the danger spot came into view: it was an elongated ellipse measuring about 60 sq. m. A mine is always a mystery. The secret of de-activating it is known only to the person who has laid it. Others can only guess.

The danger is not in the mine alone. There might be a camouflaged bit of wire attached to it which has to be cut in order to de-activate it. But there have been cases when it was doing precisely this that touched it off. The methods are numberless. It is an understatement to say that there are as many methods as mine-layers, for each one of them can invent dozens of ways of setting a mine.

Careful research has to be made first, but it is not the sort of research that is conducted in a laboratory where the result is usually attained through experiment. There is no chance of this here: experimenting means death.

The officers and three men working with their knives removed the top layer of soil from the ellipse grain by grain. Dozens of shells covered with earth now appeared, like so many seals' backs showing in the water. The depth at which they were deposited was measured. And now the whole picture became clear.

\* \* \*

In December 1942, an article entitled "False Alarm" appeared in the *Kursk News*, a leaflet put out by the Nazis in occupied Kursk. The author of the article announced that "bolshevism was defeated and Soviet power would never return to Kursk". The cocksure tone of the article betrayed the Nazis' genuine alarm in view of the relentlessly advancing Soviet Army. Having lost Voronezh and Kastornoye, the Nazis had planned to consolidate their position in Kursk, where large forces had been drawn up and huge stockpiles of ammunition concentrated. However, the Soviet Army routed their 4th tank and 82nd infantry divisions, as well as the remains of four divisions that had retreated from Voronezh. The fate of Kursk was decided. The problem of disposing of their stockpiles now confronted the Nazis. They had over a million artillery shells and fifteen thousand aircraft bombs. It was too late to take them elsewhere, nor was it possible to blow up that enormous quantity at once.

The Germans hit on the plan of hiding part of the ammunition in a spot where, exploding after they had gone, it would inevitably detonate the main stockpiles. German specialists—pyrotechnists, electricians and field engineers—went to work. A deep hole in the ground was packed full of shells and bombs.

The Soviet Army liberated Kursk on February 8, 1943. A million German shells and fifteen thousand bombs were found and removed, but what the German specialists had schemed and worked on remained undiscovered.

Almost fifteen years went by. New factory buildings, a workers' settlement and hundreds of private homes grew up in the region of the plotted explosion.

And deep in the ground the shells lay buried, hidden from the sight of men, their great destructive power unsuspected, and the mechanisms devised by the German pyrotechnists, electricians and field engineers unimpaired.

\* \* \*

Far from being dumped haphazardly into the pit, the shells and bombs—armour-piercing, high-explosive, fragmentation and demolition—had evidently been put in place by men of experience in a way that made touching them impossible.

Fifteen years underground left a deep imprint on the shells. The metal was corroded in ugly spots, the safety locks were rusted and had fallen to pieces. The damp seeping in had caused a chemical reaction, and the rusty steel was discoloured with yellow, white and green traces of oxidation.

Time had made the shells untouchable, but it had spared the blasting charges. Their destructive force was as potent as fifteen years ago.

The obvious and only logical course was to blow up the shells where they were.

A council was held again with Party and local administration workers, directors of adjoining enterprises and representatives of the railway. The results of the investigation were reported.

"Thorough investigation has established a number of circumstances indicating the extreme danger of moving the ammunition," said the army engineer. "According to instructions the presence of even one of these circumstances categorically forbids us to move ammunition and makes it obligatory for us to blow it up on the spot. The area affected by the explosion will be quite extensive."

A sign more like a groan was the general response. The directors of the enterprises situated in the danger zone listened in stunned silence to the speaker's suggestion that they should make arrangements to evacuate equipment and ready products forthwith.

"I've no arrangements to make," said S. Vymenets, director of the gypsum factory. "The factory, together with the new pre-cast concrete shop we are building, will be demolished almost completely. The collective farms of three regions are relying on our output of pre-fabricated building units—we can't make them fast enough. So you see . . ." he spread out his hands helplessly, and sat down.

"As a matter of fact I have no arrangements to make either," said K. Kostylev, the chief engineer of the railway. "From what we have heard here, the explosion will destroy a large section of the Moscow-Rostov Railway and the entire southern part of the station together with all the communication, signalling and automatic block systems."

The next to speak was I. Nagorny, chairman of the District Soviet.

"All the buildings of the new workers' settlement and approximately seven hundred private homes with a total population of ten thousand people come into the affected zone. That's no joke, is it?" he suddenly shouted, addressing no one in particular, and angrily pushed back his chair.

One after the other, the men spoke their minds. And all realised that it was as necessary to blow up the shells on the spot as it was impossible to do it.

The meeting broke up and the participants departed in silence, busy with their gloomy thoughts. Col. Diasamidze, Hero of the Soviet Union and deputy to the City Soviet, remained behind. He sat leaning heavily on the table, brooding on his helplessness. Neither his conscience nor the law permitted him to order his men to touch that pile of bombs. What was to be done, what?

Suddenly he heard a crisp voice behind him requesting permission to speak. Col. Diasamidze turned round reluctantly. There were Capt. Gorelik, First Lieut. Porotikov and Lieut. Ivashchenko.

"May we be permitted to remove the ammunition and blow it up in a safe place?" said the captain.

The colonel's first reaction was relief and a feeling of pride in his men. But it immediately gave way to anxiety. Only a few

minutes ago he had realised he had no right to send them on an assignment from which there might be no return. All that was required of him now was his permission, his permission for men to risk their lives in peace time. If he agreed, the question would be past debate, a solution would have been found.

No, their request did not make his decision less difficult to make. What was he to do? The colonel looked at his officers. . . .

Captain Leonid Gorelik. . . . As a young lad of eighteen, a Komsomol member and third-year student at the railway technical school, he had joined up as a volunteer in 1941. The army was his life.

Together with his subordinates he had taken the charges out of approximately sixty thousand mines, high-explosive shells and bombs, both the Germans' and our own. He was a mature, experienced commander and a member of his unit's Party bureau, this young officer with the high forehead and keen, intelligent eyes. One could safely rely on his self-control and skill. . . .

First Lieutenant Georgy Porotikov. . . . He was his parents' twenty-first child. He had five brothers and fifteen sisters. Georgy was tall and broad-shouldered, his physique was splendid, his face manly and strong, with thick black eyebrows slanting upwards at the ends.

The war began for him only when it was already coming to an end. The Kursk, Orel and Belgorod regions were actually chock-full of mines. Georgy spent three years clearing them. He and his small group had over ten thousand mines to their credit.

A member of the Komsomol, Georgy was now preparing to join the Party. A loyal, reliable sort. . . .

Lieutenant Victor Ivashchenko. . . . He was twenty-three but looked younger, and that was perhaps why he wore a small moustache. It did not do much good because it was very fair, his hair was fair too, and his eyes were very big and blue. Victor was very smart, slim and neat, and there was something dashing about him.

Victor was a man of action. There was one case the colonel well remembered. After removing over a hundred anti-tank mines from a collective-farm field, Ivashchenko declared it mine-free, but

the farmers were in doubt and hesitated to start the ploughing. It was high time to get on with the sowing, and there was the chairman in a panic, dashing back and forth between the tractor drivers and the soldiers. Finally, the whole thing so maddened Ivashchenko that he manned a couple of tractors with his soldiers and ploughed up the whole field of eighty-seven hectares for the doubting farmers.

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Those three Soviet officers had made such a fine art of their trade that their skill was only comparable to that of the Chinese ivory carvers or the famous Soviet artist who could write a sentence of two lines on a human hair.

"Are you sure you know what it involves?" the colonel asked after a long silence.

"Yes. We have talked it over. If need be, we are willing to lay down our lives," Ivashchenko replied.

"That is not very much, Lieutenant," Col. Diasamidze said sorrowfully.

Surely a man had nothing more precious to sacrifice than his life? What could the colonel be driving at?

When Diasamidze spoke again, his voice was gentle and somehow informal.

"It is splendid that you are prepared to sacrifice your own life for the sake of your country. But then are you prepared to sacrifice the lives of others? Dozens of lives perhaps? If we blow up the shells where they are, not a single life will be lost, the factories will evacuate their equipment and though the losses will be tremendous, they will only be material losses—the cheapest price we can pay. On the other hand, supposing you start working on the shells and touch off the lot.... You know what that will mean."

Nevertheless, the final decision reached the following day was to remove the shells.

Col. Snykov and Lieut.-Col. Sklifus who were put in charge found that there were dozens of problems to solve and hundreds

of obstacles to surmount before the ammunition could be moved.

Capt. Gorelik got his men together and explained the situation to them in minute detail.

"We need six men," he said in conclusion. "The risk is very great as you know. We'll only take on volunteers."

The first to step forward was Junior Sergeant Ivan Makhlov, a Komsomol member, a native of Voronezh. He was fair-haired, with a good-natured round face and a merry twinkle in his eyes. "If it has to be done it has to, so what's the use of talking?" his look seemed to say.

The second was Dmitry Margeshvili, also a member of the Komsomol.

After Dmitry, every single one of the men stepped forward.

The four other men selected were Sgt.-Maj. Mikhail Tyurin and Pvts. Kamil Khakimov, Vasily Golubenko and Guram Uru-shandze, all members of the Komsomol. Nikolai Solodovnikov, armoured carrier driver, was also included in the group which, counting the officers, totalled ten men.

\* \* \*

When they started out, the early morning mist had already lifted. It was a fine autumn day. They met more cars and pedestrians as they neared the Kirov District, but the armoured carrier was the only vehicle going in the direction of the railway crossing. There was quite a traffic jam when they had about two kilometres to go to their destination. Trams and buses were overcrowded with ten thousand people leaving their homes. Some were carrying parcels, baskets, suitcases and bundles, but the majority carried nothing, they showed no panic, they were talking and laughing in the ordinary way, confident that everything would be all right.

People stopped and looked at the armoured carrier, staring at the soldiers with curiosity and profound respect, waving to them and cheering them. Ivan Makhlov wanted to wave back, but a look at his friends' grave faces stopped him. It only occurred to

him then that he, too, was sitting as stiffly as though he had swallowed a poker. He wasn't doing it intentionally, far from it, it was simply that relaxing was impossible at a moment like that.

Several militia and army lorries caught up with the slowly moving armoured carrier. The militiamen and soldiers would make the cordon around the danger zone while work was going on. Altogether there would be five hundred and sixty men with red flags posted in a twenty-five kilometre circle. Several fire engines and ambulances also joined the procession to take up their posts.

\* \* \*

"Captain Gorelik reporting. The men have been posted. The armoured carrier is under cover, the trailer is ready to take on a load. May we begin work?"

"Proceed."

Three red rockets streaked across the sky. The siren sounded the alarm.

Work began. Work on huge layers of earth that needed moving, on bodies of steel, cast-iron and copper, on tons of explosives and hundreds of exposed detonators—painstaking work that called for a jeweller's precision.

At the moment their enemy was the earth. They had only removed the very top layer so far. But there was earth under the shells, packed between them and clotting the detonators, and there was no telling what might be concealed in it. The earth had to be cleared away without touching the metal, and whatever was hidden in it had to be found. Each one of the six men had his own, strictly defined, area to dissect. A surgeon performing a very complicated operation hardly has to exercise the will power needed here or keep his nerves and hand as steady as the soldiers had to do now. They worked in deep, silent concentration. At last all the earth to the last grain was removed from the 60 sq. m. surface of the ellipse, and it became clear at once which shell was to be moved first.

Ivan Makhalov, Dmitry Margeshvili and Kamil Khakimov took up positions facing the 203-millimetre high explosive shell.

The order came to get ready, take hold of the shell, and lift it.

A jerk would be the best way to lift a heavy object like that, but a jerk was strictly forbidden. The shell had to be eased off the ground gently, the way a gauze dressing is eased off a wound. And their orders were to raise it only a centimetre above the ground.

The captain and first lieutenant lay on the ground on either side of the shell to see if there was a wire attached to it underneath.

"Lift it," came the order, and slowly the three men straightened their backs.

Slowly they carried the two-hundred-and-seventy-pound shell to the trailer. It was hard on the palms with its rough corroded surface and sharp jutting corners but it would not slip, which was a good thing. All it could do was skin their hands.

Carefully they carried it up a sort of ramp into the trailer, filled about a foot-deep with sand. In the fore part a bed had already been prepared for the shell. The three men lowered it gently and laid it down as tenderly as though it were a baby after an operation.

So far so good. They went back for their next load, but it appeared that none of the shells showing above the surface could be extracted without touching the one beside it. With infinite caution they managed to lift one end of a heavy shell a little, and thus make another, lighter one approachable. They had only begun but their foreheads were already beaded with drops of sweat.

They dug up and safely deposited in the trailer a total of sixteen shells. Their hands were trembling slightly. More layers of earth had to be removed and so the trembling in their hands had to stop. Now they had to hold their sappers' knives in such a way that the blade would protrude no further than the blade in a safety razor.

Suddenly a huge red lamp flared up high overhead and a bell began to clang, breaking into the silence. This was a signal that a passenger train was coming. The loud speaker shouted an or-

der to hold up the work until the Moscow-Tbilisi express had passed.

"Who the devil wants it anyway!" the captain muttered savagely.

"I do, it's been specially sent for me to take me home to Tbilisi," Margeshvili said quietly to Makhlov alone, but everyone heard and smiled at the joke.

In a matter of minutes the lamp went out and the clanging ceased. The order to continue work came on the radio from headquarters. Captain Gorelik hurried away to the shelter which housed their radio. Lieut.-Col. Sklifus wanted to speak to him.

In the meantime, Ivan Makhlov went on with his earth-removing work. He took off a thin shaving of earth, poised his knife to go over the same place once again and suddenly jerked back his hand. There was a cold, empty feeling in his heart as though a peppermint had melted inside. It was not fear, no. Fear is something one feels when bullets are whistling overhead. This was horror. A tiny thread, like a blood vessel, was outlined under the film of earth which he had just been going to remove. Starting from the detonator of the 152-mm. shell it ran on and away, vanishing among the other shells.

"What's wrong?" Porotikov asked seeing his friend's stunned attitude.

Makhlov made no reply, he simply indicated the outlined wire with his hand.

"To the shelter," the first lieutenant ordered.

Silently, the soldiers obeyed.

Porotikov minutely inspected the time-worn wire. Bits of insulation, decomposed to the softness of mud, clung to the wire here and there. In parts, the metal hairs were exposed.

The first lieutenant selected a thin double-edged knife, or rather a cross between a knife and an awl, and began what in all justice can be called an engraving artist's work.

It transpired that the wire was attached to the ring of the percussion cap inserted in the detonator. The diameter of the percussion cap was no more than 2 mm. and evidently it was made of a special alloy. An iron one would have been reduced to dust

long before. However, the cap was badly corroded anyway and it was impossible to tell what held it together. Had it been new it would have been easy enough to hold it in place with one hand and cut the wire with the other, but in its present condition it could not be touched. It looked so frail the wind could snap it in two, and if it did the spring would be released and the whole stockpile would blow up.

Captain Gorelik came running back in a flurry.

"Well, well, well," he said after a good look at the percussion cap. "It's a special one they made. Shells of this calibre just don't have percussion caps."

Their next step was to find where the other end of the wire led. Captain Gorelik now used the awl-knife. He cleared about forty centimetres of wire from earth and only then the other end came into view. Using his fingers, he broke the fine metal hairs of the wire one by one. A wire-cutter would not do, fingers were much more sensitive. Now he could call the men.

The soldiers were sitting and chatting in the shelter.

"We'd have certainly shot into the sky," Margeshvili said.

"That wouldn't be bad," Makhalov said with a smile. "We'd become sputniks, that's all."

All of them laughed heartily.

After they had deposited sixty-seven shells each in its own sand bed on the floor of the trailer, they backed up the armour carrier and hooked the trailer to it. The order to start came over the radio, a red rocket was fired, and they were off on their first trip.

\* \* \*

They had to drive through five streets and then along a country road, the sort of road one still comes across on the outskirts of some towns and in villages. Urgent repairs had been made: the ruts had been filled in, the bumps evened out, and a steam roller had gone over it, but time had been too short to make the road perfectly smooth.

The armoured carrier moved very slowly. All around there was silence and emptiness. There were none of the usual noises

from the gypsum factory or the rope works, no smoke rose from the chimneys of the engineering factory, no sound of passing trains or switchmen's signals.

The armoured carrier left the railway crossing behind it and came out on a deserted street. All the front gates stood shut, the windows were secured with shutters, and no smoke curled up from the chimneys. There was not so much as a stray dog or cat in sight. Even the birds kept away as though sensing danger. The town might have been dead.

Nikolai Solodovnikov had often driven down these streets before. The huge school building looked strangely dead. There was a padlock on the door of the delicatessen shop. The blinds were down on the boot-repairer's window. A little further on they came to the child welfare centre. As a rule there were women going in or coming out with a day's supply of feeding bottles, but that morning there was not a soul about. Everything was closed.

Slowly, like a giant beetle, the carrier crawled on with its lethal load. The driver and the captain kept their eyes fastened on the road. There was a hollow ahead. To avoid it they had to keep close to the ditch with a hairbreadth margin. A good driver could squeeze through without any trouble, but then there was the trailer behind. The captain opened the door and watched the wheels of the trailer. They fitted into the tracks left by the armored carrier exactly. After that they came to a place where the road sloped slightly to one side. The captain stood on the running-board on his toes and watched the shells. The trailer dipped slightly and it looked as if they might slide out of their sand beds.

"Slow down," the captain ordered. "Slower still. That's right."

That was another dangerous moment safely behind them, but there were more obstacles ahead. And Nikolai Solodovnikov found himself gripping the wheel with both hands, holding it for all he was worth, his whole body tense. "Why, only beginners drive like that!" he told himself in derision and relaxed his muscles.

They reached the sand-pit where Lieut. Ivashchenko stood waiting for them. There was hardly a chance of driving down

to the floor of the sand-pit with its holes, mounds and ledges. On the other hand if they stopped too far away it would be a difficult job carrying the shells down.

Nikolai Solodovnikov drove down in first gear and the men began to unload the shells and put them on the ground. The captain was called up by Lieut. Porotikov on the portable wireless. The lieutenant reported that the men working on the stockpile had discovered electric fuse devices on two of the shells.

The captain's reply was: "Don't touch anything until I get back."

Col. Snykov, listening in to the conversation on his own set, added:

"Tell Capt. Gorelik to do nothing without me. I'm starting out at once."

"But can we blow up these?" Ivashchenko asked.

"These yes."

Very slowly and carefully they carried the shells down.

Ivashchenko bent over the last of the demolition shells and instinctively sprang back. The shell had emitted a faint crackle, the sort of sound one hears when a rusty bit of iron is bent in two or when two live wires touch.

Picking up a handful of moist sand, Ivashchenko carefully covered a corroded spot with it. Weak though the autumn sun was it had heated the shell and reaction had set in. To arrest it, the shell had to be cooled.

When all the men had taken shelter, Lieut. Ivashchenko carried the last remaining bomb to the pile and placed the blasting charges in such a way that the explosion would go earthward. All was in readiness.

After that Lieut. Selivanov joined the short wires of the blasting charges to the long wire snaking to the blasting machine in the trench. With a last look to see that everything was in order, both lieutenants walked away.

The blasting machine looked like a field telephone—it also had a handle one had to twirl. After a few quick turns of the handle a red light went on in the machine. Lieut. Selivanov pressed a

button. The earth shook. The first batch of shells had been destroyed.

In the meantime, the men working at the stockpile were faced with a trickier task than before: they found that a shell protruding from the ground had a wire soldered to it, the other end of which, after looping around other shells on the way, was soldered to one buried deep below. With great skill and caution, the soldiers managed to disconnect the wires safely. They loaded more shells into the trailer and again drove through the silent, deserted streets to the sand-pit. Explosion after explosion made the earth quake until at last a cluster of green rockets shot into the sky like a victory salute.

\* \* \*

Igor Nagorny drove his car at break-neck speed to the radio broadcasting centre. He rushed in shouting for the announcer, but before the man could be located Nagorny himself picked up the microphone and said:

"The Executive Committee of Kirov District informs all citizens that the ammunition dump has been cleared out. As from this minute, the district may resume its normal life."

His relief and joy sought an outlet and he wanted to say more but the words would not come and he stood holding the microphone in confusion. Suddenly, remembering the way broadcasts usually went he said:

"Here is the news again...."

No, that was not what he had wanted to say at all, the words sounded too stiff and ordinary.

"Comrades, dear comrades!" he suddenly found himself shouting. "The danger is over, go home and don't worry, everything's all right!"

Crowds of people had already poured out of town to meet the returning heroes. And Ivan Makhlov was thinking: this is how Soviet people welcomed their liberators during the war.

## **VALENTINA GAGANOVA**

*By Dmitry Zvantsev*



Fine cotton cloth made by the Vyshny Volochok Cotton Mills is on sale in all the shops in the Soviet Union. It is at this mill that Valentina Gaganova has been working for eleven years now. A member of a front-ranking, highly paid team, Gaganova asked to be transferred to a lagging team where the earnings were naturally much lower, and using her experience and energy she pulled the team out of the rut and placed it among the best. For her initiative and her personal example, which is equivalent to a feat, Valentina Gaganova has been awarded the

title of Hero of Socialist Labour. The "Valentina Gaganova Movement" has swept the country. Giving a hand to lagging teams and thus raising labour productivity will save hundreds of millions of rubles in the textile industry and other branches of the national economy.

Nothing in this world ever happens suddenly. The ice in a river does not break up all of a sudden; the river starts gathering strength long before, to make good and ready for the final effort. Nor do the young, shiny and sticky leaves pop out of their buds spontaneously; no, the tree has long been getting ready for the day, sending its heady, springtime juices up and down all its veins, big and small.

I remember a short discussion at a Komsomol meeting at one of the most out-of-the-way kolkhozes in the remotest district of Kalinin Region. The meeting was devoted to the theme: "Communism is the youth of the world, and it is for the young to build it." They were discussing the future, and a youngster with blue eyes and fair hair said:

"Now, when communism is announced...."

"You mean when it is built, when we have built it..." Galya Marasanova, the Komsomol secretary, a serious-minded girl, corrected him.

If I were asked today when communism will begin, I would answer: "It is already beginning. Where? Everywhere. All about us. And to be more exact? One of the addresses is the textile mills at Vyshny Volochok, Kalinin Region."

## 1

Lucy turned away to the window and, taking a small mirror from her pocket, became absorbed in a study of her eyebrows, plucked to a thread. Her whole attitude expressed restiveness.

When she had stood there long enough for Valentina to go away, she moved the mirror a little and looked. No, Valentina had not gone. There she was standing behind, boring holes in the back of Lucy's head with her eyes, and waiting.

Lucy put her mirror away, sighed and defiantly turned round.

"Well?" she asked, knowing perfectly well that she would not be heard in the din of the shop.

Valentina did not hear her, she just guessed the question from the movement of the other's lips. "Lucy will have a fit again," she thought; still, she risked it and silently nodded in the direction of one of Lucy's machines where the cops had long been ready. Then she jerked her chin at Nina and Zhenya who were evidently learning a new song with their arms on each other's shoulders.

Lucy Shibalova watched the pantomime. She raised her eyebrows at Valentina as much as to say: "So what? What business is it of yours?" And then, with a nonchalant shrug, she went past Valentina to the two girls, inwardly fuming and furtively shaking her fist at them.

And Nina—honestly that girl was hopeless!—with an impudent look at Lucy, her team leader, said: "Keep your shirt on, chief. I know what I'm doing." Languidly, as in a slow motion picture, she strolled to her machine to take down the ready cops.

Blushing furiously, Lucy stole a look at Valentina out of the corner of her eye. Valentina shook her head regretfully and went back to her own work.

The day was ruined. Lucy would not go to the cinema that night although she had wanted to see the film and had the ticket right in her pocket. She would not feel like reading either. And she would not be able to fall asleep, she'd just lie in bed and stare at the ceiling, nursing her misery and resenting everyone. But what could she do, how pull up the team, how influence the girls who refused to listen?

Her shift over, Lucy started home all by herself. She had already left the premises and was about to turn into a side street, when she heard someone calling her.

She turned round. It was Valentina Gaganova.

"You got angry with me, I know, Lucy, but honestly I meant it kindly. Why, it makes me sick to watch your team work. The way that Nina of yours moves her hands, she might be gathering

cobwebs in her sleep. And the cops are there waiting. I mean well, so for heaven's sake don't get mad at me."

Lucy stood still and gave Valentina a hard look.

"You mean well.... I'd like to see you with a team like mine. It's easy for you front-rankers to talk. Who do you have in your team, and who do I have? That's as plain as plain can be. We only graduated from the factory and workshop school six months ago, and they didn't teach us how to be front-rankers there."

"Careful, Lucy, or I might really ask to be transferred to your team," Valentina broke in.

"You're welcome, but there's not much hope that you'll really do it," Lucy said, and walked on.

## 2

Ilya Grigoryevich Traber, the manager of the spinning factory, sat in his office, twirling a pencil in his hands and thinking. He loved that hour of the evening when the day's worries and cares seemed to be over, and the closing hour was drawing near. That was when he liked to sit there undisturbed and think.

There was plenty to think about. That morning, it was pay-day, he was walking past the crowd at the cashier's window and heard snatches of conversation. Someone said to a rosy-cheeked, plump girl who had just signed for her money:

"Why, Nina Lvova, you got less than anyone else, poor child! Dear, dear, lagging behind like that, a young, healthy team!"

"Never mind," she shrugged. "I do enough and more."

"Did you hear that? Try and build communism with people like that!" the same voice said.

Traber was struck by the words. He studied the statement before him. Nina Lvova worked in Lucy Shibalova's team. Yes, they were a poor lot. Their showings were no more than 85 per cent of the established output rates. Why, it was a disgrace! The chicks were lagging (he always called the factory and workshop school graduates chicks), but what was even worse—the chicks

were not particularly worried about it. They had to be helped, but how?

Communism.... The night before he had listened to a talk on the building of a material basis for communism. The speaker's eloquence was quite professional. He started in a low mutter, his voice swelling towards the end of each sentence and then dropping with great speed and smoothness, only to start gathering force again for the next quotation. The chap made everything so easy, he had ready-made phrases for everything: "We must compete for.... Struggle against.... Be guided by.... Popularise.... And then, comrades, we shall arrive at the triumph of communism!"

There was nothing wrong with the words he used, but somehow he made the attainment of communism a pretty easy thing.

And Traber had a whole team of backward workers at his factory! And no popularising of any advanced methods would be of help. The girls knew Patrikeyeva's method of twisting the thread, and other tricks of the trade, they even took part in the emulation, still the team was weak and just barely stumbling along.

### 3

Traber jotted down figures.

The usual measures were no good in this case. He certainly could leave it all to time, they would get into their stride sooner or later, and everything would be fine. But time was valuable, how much would be lost! And it was poor consolation to say that after all someone had to lag behind the front-rankers. The front-rankers were all right, every one of them was performing miracles of efficiency. And the others.... Who was going to perform the miracles for the others?

Things were bad with the others. Valentina was well aware of it with Lucy's team working right there, only a few steps away. One of the girls was standing idle again, while Lucy was running about with tear-filled eyes and trembling hands. No words reached Valentina in the din but she knew what Lucy was

shouting to Lydia Semyonova: her machine needed adjusting, it was tearing the thread. She was right. There was Lucy now putting the red signal on the machine with a gesture of despair, peering down the aisle in the hope of seeing the assistant mechanic, and then, dropping her arms hopelessly, running to the window to cry.

Valentina wanted to go to Lucy, but checked the impulse: Lucy would get mad again, and say that Valentina was just a busybody.

Walking up and down in front of her machine and watching the cops, Valentina thought and thought.

"Honestly, it's enough to make you really go and join that team! What rotten luck—machines out of order, the team leader in tears and the rest of them loafing. It must hurt to be called the lagging team. It's true that the school doesn't teach them to be front-rankers, they pass their exams, get their certificates, start on a job, and that's all anyone worries about. Isn't there any way to help them?"

Valentina glanced at her neighbours. The red signal was still there, and there was no sign of the assistant mechanic. Valentina gestured to Nadya Smirnova to take over, she'd be back in a minute.

Half an hour later another machine of Lucy's got stalled. Valentina wanted to run and help again, but that was not the way, she could not possibly manage two teams.

She came home late that night; they had a meeting of the Komsomol committee to discuss the terms of the competition for the title of Communist Work Team. It was certainly fine, this being all for one and one for all. Answering for your own self was easy, but this.... Wait a moment, Valentina! Aren't you concerned with your personal success alone? Your photo is up on the board of honour, you sit at the presidium table, you're called a front-ranker. Sure, your team is doing splendidly, all the girls are so hard-working and conscientious, they hardly have anyone to compete with. And Lucy Shibalova's? What was it she said.... "I'd like to see you with a team like mine. It's easy for you front-rankers to talk"....

Was that being all for one and one for all?

Valentina stood still, struck by the thought that had flashed across her mind. "I told her then that I'd get transferred to their team. What if I really did that? But no, that's nonsense. To begin with it's unheard-of that a front-ranker should be permitted to join the lagging. Well, to hell with that: it will be heard of now. And then who will I hand my team over to? Never mind, a good job will be soon filled. Nadya can do it. But the main obstacle is the hurt to Lucy's feelings. It doesn't matter. Go ahead and mind all you please, Lucy, I'll make you a front-ranker yet!"

Sleep would not come to Valentina that night. She tossed and turned and even tried counting sheep: "One sheep, two sheep, three..." But before she got to the tenth sheep she was out of bed. She walked about the room for a minute or two in thought, and then sat down and wrote an application addressed to the shop superintendent, Anatoly Vasilyevich Smirnov.

#### 4

Smirnov read the application, pushed back his chair and started pacing the room. Valentina sat there waiting, saying nothing, her cheeks ablaze. When she could not bear the silence any longer she said:

"Well, what do you say, Anatoly Vasilyevich?" And, without waiting for his answer, went on: "I don't know what you're going to say, but I'll join that team just the same. There! Because ... because in communist teams it ought to be one for all and all for one. And what I want to do is, how shall I put it ... raise the lagging to the level of the front-ranking!" Embarrassment swept over Valentina, the last sentence sounded rather bombastic.

"I see, but let's not be too hasty, this needs thinking over. Your team is something of a legend. What will happen now? Do you realise what it'll do to my plan? And who'll take over?"

"Smirnova will."

"All right. And do you know that you'll have to say good-bye to your fine earnings?"

"Never mind," Valentina said. "I know that."

"Oh, you do! That's fine. And another thing.... You really are a sport, Valentina! One for all, did you say? No, no, don't start jumping yet. Let's go and speak to Traber."

No sooner had Valentina explained her plan than Traber cried: "Good for you!" Tugging at his hair excitedly, he also began to pace the room. And then they talked about the old team, they were already calling it her old team, about Smirnova, and Valentina's earnings.

When Valentina returned to the workshop she wore a dazed look. The girls in her team exchanged glances, wondering if the manager had given her a scolding or something. Valentina started down the row of her "old machines", her old friends, the merest scratch on which she knew and remembered. She patted the machines, then called Nadya Smirnova. She wanted to say it in a calm, low voice, but she had to shout.

"Good-bye, Nadya. I'm leaving you."

"Sick leave or something?" Nadya shouted back, wrinkling up her face in an effort to hear the answer.

"I'm leaving for good. Understand? I'll be working in Lucy Shibalova's team."

Nadya's jaw dropped. Valentina looked at her through a veil of tears, hugged her hard and planted a kiss on her cheek.

"All right, I'll tell you later. Bye-bye." And Valentina went to her new team.

## 5

That day marked the beginning of the battle for the fate of Lucy Shibalova, Zhenya Pankova, Nina Lvova, and the other girls who until then had belonged to the lagging.

A human being is not a machine, and each has a temperament that sometimes asserts itself in the most unexpected and incredible ways.

Valentina would tell Raya Pavkova to sort out the rejects, and Raya would say with a defiant toss of her curly hair:

"What next! There's no hurry!"

When Valentina told Nina (oh, that girl was a headache!) to go and help the doffers, she simply dismissed the order with a shrug.

"I'm a spinner, I'll have you know. I don't have to do it."

No, it was not that the girls were hostile because she was a new team leader who had been wished on them; no, they were simply not in the habit of trying their hardest. They were accustomed to being at the bottom. "We're last, so what's the difference!" Valentina sensed this in every word they crossed her with.

"You're last, but you're going to be first! D'you hear me? I'll eat my hat if I don't make something of you!" Valentina would yell at them in a rage. All the Gaganovs were short-tempered. She'd pull herself up at once, though, and say with a smile: "All right, I won't yell any more, I'll be your nurse, so there...."

There was no other way out. She all but led them by the hand showing them what to do. A spirit of *camaraderie* had to be instilled. The spinners had to help the doffers and vice versa, otherwise they would lose hours of time, and make no money at all.

"We make enough, we're not complaining," Nina said again.

"Oh stop it, Nina," another girl said. "That's not the point. You've got to do an honest job, that's what."

This remark was Valentina's first victory, a very small one, it's true. There was better team-work too: the girls seemed to realise at last that they were all dependent on one another.

She went back to see how her "old" team was doing whenever she had a minute to spare. Things were going so swimmingly with Nadya that, in spite of herself, Valentina felt a twinge of jealousy. "Supposing I should fail, the disgrace of it!" But she banished the panicky thought, and hurried back to her girls.

Once, starting down the stairs, she overheard a conversation that made her furious for the rest of the day. Some women were talking on the landing below in mean, sanctimonious voices.

"Look at the way our Valentina is killing herself! What's ailing her? What more does she want? She had a bird in hand, now she wants two in the bush.... Honestly!"

"What more does she want? Why, she wants to get on. Before you know it she'll get a nice flat, and then...."

"Honestly! What are those people after!"

Valentina started back, cut to the quick. As she worked she looked intently at the faces of the women about her wondering if they thought the same. The hypocritical voice kept ringing in her ears: "What are those people after?"

Oh, she was after a lot. It always seemed to her that nothing would get done unless she flew there to help, to shout the others down and prove that the thing had to be tackled in just that way and in no other. She was not content with her quite decent showings, and strived, on her own initiative, to get more out of her machines, eventually raising the operation time factor to 0.96, the highest in the country.

What was more, she could not feel content or happy while others had trouble with their work or in their private life. That is why she joined Lucy's team and saddled herself with the burden. She wanted to get on, did she? Some getting on this—the top team leader lagging behind....

That was a fact recorded by the inexorable chart on the indices board. That was what people were saying. The foreman grumbled at Valentina from time to time:

"You're maybe a pioneer and all that, but I'll have to send in a report just the same. Where's the discipline in your team? There isn't any. Lydia Semyonova was late again, remember that."

Didn't she know it all! The team was not working smoothly. The girls would seem to be trying one day, and then again....

The cop was ready, but there wasn't a soul near the machine. They had all disappeared. Valentina looked about her, she heard someone giggling, and with a sinking heart started for the door. She pushed it open and stopped short. The girls, her nice, good girls were up to their tricks again. They were dancing with not a care in the world. Take that, team leader! Valentina wanted to know who started it. They smirked and said nothing.

"No one started it, we all did ..." some said.

And so, there it was—"one for all and all for one"!

But it was not like that always. The day came at long last when for the first time in many, many days Valentina felt light-hearted and gay. Her girls got their first large pay packet. Valentina watched Nina count her wad of money with a puzzled look, she listened to the chatter of the others, and laughed a happy laugh.

"What's the joke?" Nina turned round on hearing Valentina's laugh.

"Nothing. Why not hand it back to the cashier, you never wanted to make more, did you?"

"Don't bring that up, for heaven's sake," Nina replied with a smile. "What does it matter what I used to say?"

A victory was won that day, and there was more to come: the chart showed that the team had stepped up production by as much as 15 per cent. The girls were congratulated, articles appeared about them first in the factory newspaper, then in the district, and finally in the regional Komsomol press. The team forged on ahead. It reached the top of the ladder in January 1959, just before the Party Congress. Even in Valentina's "old" team the showings were lower. Victory was complete.

Gradually, it came home to the entire staff that the movement started in the spinning shop was truly daring, novel, and wonderful. Until then no one had given Valentina Gaganova's action that title, it had seemed logical and natural, and they had taken it for granted. She saw that her friends needed help, and so she went and helped them with no thought for herself—it could not have been otherwise.

The movement grew and spread, revealing new and amazing possibilities. It was due to start, that was evident to all, whether that day or the next, in this town or somewhere else, because the people themselves were creating the new, finding fresh reserves within themselves, and were cultivating a higher social conscience.

Already a score of top team leaders at the factory have asked to be transferred to lagging teams. Of the twelve in the spinning

shop, Zoya Danilova and Tamara Andreyeva have already made headway with their backward teams. And another thing: one lagging team refused help, preferring to catch up with Gaganova's unaided. And they did! The team leader, Valentina Brovina, has brought their showings up to 116 per cent.

A new expression has become current at the factory: "Watch out, or you'll have a Gaganova pulling you up." Anatoly Vasil'yevich Smirnov, speaking at a meeting, got the phrase started.

"Some conceptions and words may go out of usage soon, friends," he had said. "And why not? For instance, now the director of an enterprise can sign an order dismissing or demoting a person for not coping with his job. That's an administrative measure. But it's going to become extinct. A good worker will simply say to a poor worker: 'Here, move over, if you can't manage I'll show you how.' That's the way it's going to be."

## 7

Valentina Gaganova has followers in the villages as well. One of them is Olga Ivanova, a milkmaid in Kalinin Region. She, too, is a front-ranker, a person commanding respect. She was a delegate to the Twenty-First Party Congress. Should she not be content with the top place she holds in the region, with the affection and respect she enjoys?

After meeting Valentina Gaganova she realised that being a front-ranker was not good enough so long as matters were going badly at the neighbouring dairy farm. Olga Ivanova could not very well move to another village, but then she could take over the most difficult cows from that farm in exchange for her good ones. "I'll prove to everyone that the difficult cows can also be made to yield rivers of milk!" She carried through her plan, and now the "hopeless cases" have become record-breakers.

Here is another instance of the movement's wonderful influence. There is a girl called Galina Sergeyeva working at the agricultural machines plant in Bezhetsk. Truth to tell, she was never too good at her job, and it was generally accepted that Galina would always be bringing up the rear. But then every-

thing changed. There was a meeting at the machine shop one day; the subjects under discussion were Gaganova's movement and competition for Communist Work Teams. Galina asked for the floor.

"You've always known me for a poor worker," she said. "I was, that's true. But I give you my word, my word of honour, that from now on I'll do my best. Please appoint me leader of the most backward team, and I'll make it a Communist Work Team. On my honour, I will."

Her plea was so fervent that she simply had to be given a try. The team she was put in charge of is one of the best in the shop now, and before long it will certainly become eligible for the title of Communist Work Team.

And so will Valentina Gaganova's team. The girls have all decided to study, all including Valentina who only has a trade school education.

Valentina Gaganova gets letters from all sorts of people, some of them in no way connected with industry, congratulating her and seeking her advice. That is because the movement she has started is not confined to a narrow professional field, the initiator must be a person with vision, one who helps to broaden the vision of others, and therefore any advice coming from her must be worth while.

No, nothing in this world ever happens suddenly. A movement like Gaganova's cannot start spontaneously, it takes spiritual growth, moral strength, and much concentrated thought.

People of Valentina Gaganova's stamp do not stand still; their initiative inspires others. They will not wait for communism to be announced. They themselves are building it. And it is already here, one of the addresses is: the textile mills at Vyshny Volochok.

Konstantin Lapin



(SIX LETTERS

SIGNED

MARINA P.)



Marina's letters are truly human documents. They give the story of two young people, our contemporaries—fine, honest people with big, courageous hearts.

This is how it all began.

A few years ago I published my short story "Alyonka". It is about a little girl who found herself the father she did not have, and about her mother to whom happiness came at last. I received a lot of letters from my readers, and in reply gave a talk on the Moscow radio on moral issues for the benefit of our youth. This talk brought me over six thousand letters from radio listeners, and among them there was one from Marina P., a young

schoolteacher in Kurgan. I wrote back to her, and that is how our correspondence started.

So here are Marina's six letters. I honestly think they deserve the attention of readers.

Her very first letter was so profound in content that my interest was instantly aroused. Marina, a teacher of literature at the Pedagogical Institute in Kurgan, told me of her love for a young Hungarian whom she had met under rather unusual circumstances. The letter stirred a chord in me, but let the reader judge it for himself, here it is.

### **Friendship—Sincere, Tested and True**

"I was a post-graduate student. I had already passed my candidate's exams and finished one of the three chapters of my thesis. And then a terrible thing happened: I fell ill, very gravely ill. My legs were paralysed. I was put in the clinic of the First Leningrad Medical Institute.

"During the first four months the thought of carrying on with my studies did not even occur to me, to my doctors or my friends. I was in pain all the time. I shall not dwell on my sufferings and fears during those months. The questions tormented me: supposing I'll never be able to walk again, what then? How am I going to live? Who'll want me? (I have no parents.) What about my degree? And so on, without end. There were hosts of questions, and being in a hospital room with other gravely ill patients did not make my mind any easier.

"I was not neglected, of course. Someone from the institute came to see me every day, someone I had worked with or with whom I had lived in the hostel, someone from the Komsomol organisation, teachers, post-graduates or student friends of mine. Still, I was as miserable as ever.

"After four months of lying in bed my pains went but I was not allowed to sit up yet. My doctors and my friends began to talk to me about my thesis in a roundabout way. But I could not even think of it. Behind me were sports, concerts (I could not hold back my tears when I listened to music in my hospital

bed), public libraries, the whole world. . . . And before me . . . the future was obscure. I could not move, and the doctors made no promises.

"You will probably say: and what about Korchagin and Meresyev? Oh, I know, people held them up as an example to me thousands of times and I myself knew their stories by heart. But it's one thing reading and hearing about them, and quite another when you yourself are in the same predicament, even if your sufferings are much lighter than theirs. Does this mean that I was weak, that I had no will power? I suppose it does.

"One day my doctor told me about the young Hungarian who was in the room across the corridor from mine. He was a student of history at the university, in his last year. He had been in bed for eight months with both legs paralysed. And here, in the hospital, he had studied for his exams and passed them, and now, in a room made available to him, he was working on his diploma paper.

"I could well imagine how difficult it must be preparing for exams and working on a diploma paper in his condition because I knew how much the pain, the endless injections and everything took out of you. I was impressed, but after all a diploma paper is not the same thing as a scientific thesis. For my work I needed archives, dictionaries, old manuscripts (the history of the Russian language is my subject), and they could not all be brought to the hospital, could they? In those four months I had actually forgotten what I had written in my one completed chapter. What I certainly had to do was at least put into shape what I had already done. I had all my notes, papers and books brought to the hospital, and started working on them for a couple of hours a day. Needless to say, I could add nothing new to the chapter, all I did was polish it up, add bits to it, and generally put it in shape.

"My doctor kept bringing me news of the Hungarian. 'He' had written another paragraph, 'he' had finished the first chapter, and so on. The patients who could walk about looked in on him and brought me news of him too. He was already able to get about in a wheel chair. In the evenings, with my door open,

I could hear him talking, playing dominoes and singing songs (softly, so the nurse on duty could not hear) with the other patients.

"One day in my presence the doctor told the nurse who was making the rounds with him:

"'Yes, before I forget, ring up the university, will you, the Party organisation, and ask them to send a philology student up here for András. He wants the Russian in his first two chapters checked.'

"'Couldn't I do it? I'm a linguist, you know,' I said.

"The doctor agreed. He confessed to me later that it had been a ruse on his part to drag me 'out of the shadows'.

"And that is how András and I met.

"He wheeled himself to my room that same day and changed everything for me. He was jolly, cheerful, amusing, a bit sarcastic, and full of energy.

"We argued about the cinema, the theatre, music—which he also adored, and football. We discussed life's vital problems and such trifles as the comparative merits of Hungarian and Soviet fountain-pens. We had quarrels too: 'scientific' ones when I disagreed with the language, style and content of some part of his work, and he, in defence of his point of view, called me narrow-minded or a blockhead; and 'earthy' quarrels over his smoking too much or talking his way out of some bothersome treatment.

"Our friendship began in a queer sort of way, because from the first we discussed our most vital problems. How were we going to go on living? What were we good for? It was a real friendship, stripped of romance, but it was firm and true.

"I forgot my own troubles in my anxiety over him when he was in the operating room undergoing some far from pleasant treatment, and only breathed easily when I saw him brought back to his room across the corridor. And whenever I went through the same thing in the operating room, he remained near by in his wheel chair waiting for me to come out.

"My case was more acute than his, but then it responded to treatment more quickly. After six months I was put in a wheel chair. It was our first shared joy.

"Now we could sit together and study in the special room allotted to us, each busy with his own work.

"Did we know then what we meant to one another? Of course we did, but we never talked about it. What was the use? We were both crippled, neither could be sure of recovery, and besides he was a Hungarian and would go back home one day...."

### We Could Not Have Fought Without One Another

"We simply could not have done without one another then, we could not have fought the battle alone. It had all come naturally to us, in a very profound and austere sort of way. Now his friends dropped in to see me too, and mine to see him. My institute friends knew all about him, my teachers visited him, and his friends, whom I did not know but who were already dear to me, visited me.

"I recovered faster than he did. I began to walk. Spring came and I was allowed to stroll about in the garden, while ten or twenty steps in his room, and even that with difficulty, was all András could manage by himself. He began to brood, and a new expression came into his face—he smiled, but his eyes! I shall not venture to describe the look in his eyes.

"I did everything I could to cheer him up, and I succeeded.

"That last evening we spent together in July, when I was to be discharged the next day, cannot be described in words. We sat on the sofa in front of the window that faces the Botanical Gardens and talked and talked about everything under the sun except 'us'. I promised him that I would visit him often.

"A booking had been made for me for a three-months' stay at a health home. I hurried to the hospital with the news. In the corridor I met the doctor who had treated me, and he told me that András was moody and restless, that his temperature had gone up and the pain in his legs had come back.

"Naturally I told András nothing about my booking and cancelled it the moment I got home. I was being foolish, my friends told me, I had to think of my health, there was strenuous work

ahead and my thesis above all, and I could still 'hardly stumble along' (I leaned on a stick then).

"But I couldn't act otherwise. We had gone through so much together, we had suffered so much and we needed each other so badly, so how could I leave when he was still in trouble? I stayed.

"I went to see him every day. Sometimes I stayed by his side all night. The relapse had no aftereffects and now he began to get well quickly. He could walk.

"He sat for his degree in the hospital, in the head physician's office. Lots of people were present—patients, nurses, doctors, medical students, his friends and mine. Lots of nice things were said about friendship, will power and faith. It was our second shared joy....

"A month later András was discharged from hospital, and a fortnight after that we saw him off to Budapest. And only then did I realise with a terrible stab how much he meant to me.

"I stayed in Leningrad a year longer, I defended my thesis and received my degree. We wrote to one another in fits and starts: we either wrote every day or not a line for a month or more. I had recovered completely, I could play volleyball again and go skiing, all I had to give up was gymnastics. He wrote that he had to walk with a stick. It did not interfere with his work at one of Budapest's institutes, in which he was engrossed to the exclusion of everything else.

"I was assigned to the pedagogical institute in Kurgan, and I've been here for over a year now. It is over two years since we parted."

## We Cannot Live Apart Any Longer!

"It was impossible to live apart any longer. He knew it and so did I. He asked me to marry him.

"I did a lot of thinking. I love Russia, I love the Russian language, the Russian countryside with its dear birch trees. I love my native world. These are not mere words. It's true. I had never thought about it before, I never had to somehow, but now....

It will be very hard to be deprived of all that. How can I live away from home?

"But András is the person I hold dearest in the world, I can't imagine life without him. I wrote and said that I would marry him. I am waiting for my visa now.

"Still, I'm thinking, thinking and thinking....

"Everything is so complicated, so difficult, and at the same time so simple: I love him and he loves me.

"'Not making a go of things' is something I'm absolutely sure will never happen to us. Never! We came to know each other in need, and that means a lot. Those were the hardest moments in our lives.

"Do we know each other well? Yes, we do. I know that his father was a Communist, an underground worker. We think alike on things that matter.

"But leaving my homeland!"

In conclusion, Marina asked me to tell her whether I approved of her going or not.

What could I say? She loved and was loved. Her fiancé was a real man. Marina and András had a common aim in life, that of building socialism. Is it not a lofty aim? They shared the same ideas and thoughts, the same hopes and aspirations. Their love had stood the test of time. All I could do was wish her every happiness and bon voyage.

Still, I could not help asking: would she be happy away from her homeland? Would she be able to adapt herself to a new way of life? Had she made a thorough study of her future husband's character, his "national" character if she knew what I meant? Their friendship had started under very unusual circumstances, would not the glamour rub off? Would it not be best, perhaps, for her to visit Hungary as a tourist first?

Marina replied at some length. My questions had disturbed her, although they had been worrying her too and she had given much thought to them already. She told me frankly that she could not say yes to all my questions, and that was precisely why she had to go to Hungary and be with him. As a matter of fact

András had also suggested that she should come and “look around” before deciding. She quoted him: “If you don’t like it here, if you cannot bring yourself to stay, I’ll let you go without a word. It’s up to you to decide.”

“In these two odd years I have come to know that I am bound to him forever,” Marina wrote. “Without him I miss that something which makes me a better person; all my friends and acquaintances I compare with him, to their loss . . . in short, there are thousands of reasons. I love him, that’s all. This decided the issue, I could not ‘test’ him.

“If I went as a tourist, how long could I stay—two or three weeks? And what could I see in the time, would I be any the wiser? All I know is that I’d promise to marry him when I had to start back. I know I would. Definitely. But then why start back at all?

“Now, supposing I sharpened all my senses and went there prepared to take everything with a pinch of salt, unlike an ordinary tourist? Supposing I did discover something I did not quite like, something that went against the grain, things that mattered too? Would I say ‘no’ to him then? I would not. I’m not quibbling. I am not deluding myself.

“And so, after going over everything a thousand times, I rejected the idea of going on what I believe is a senseless scouting trip. (It’s senseless because the answer is always the same: *I need him, him alone.*) I have promised him to come for good.”

### **Happiness Cannot Pass Me By!**

“I want you to believe me and understand me: my decision is neither easy nor flippant. Happiness cannot pass me by! This letter of mine is all common sense and no sentiment, don’t you agree? Well, since it is anyway I’ll say a bit more about the common sense part. Maybe I’m wrong but I do believe that *there must be common sense as well as sentiment in marriage.* (A ‘marriage of convenience’ is quite another thing.) I’m sure of his common sense, and mine? Mine too.

“I do know him. (I met his mother too. She stayed a week in Leningrad before taking András home from the hospital. She

speaks a little Russian.) Who did I fall in love with more, him or her? I wonder. I'm joking, of course."

For all her attempts at lightness, Marina's letters clearly showed how long and earnestly she had debated the questions with herself. Between lectures and at home she must have gone over everything that had been between her and András again and again, everything they had said and written to each other. Separated from him, she could take better stock of his and her feelings, be a sterner judge.

### I'll Get Well and Graduate Here in the Soviet Union

"At first everyone was afraid he'd never be able to walk again," Marina wrote. "Several consultations were held, specialists were invited from other clinics, and they all pronounced the same verdict: he would never walk. It was terrible to see that young, handsome, strong man (he is tall and really very strong) completely helpless. The doctors did everything, and put him back on his feet. When they first let him stand up for one single minute beside his bed everyone gathered to watch him. András only managed to stand for thirty seconds. His legs gave way and he sat down. His pulse was racing and sweat simply poured down his face. But he had stood on his own feet. He had to exercise regularly after that, then came the wheel chair, and after that he made his first steps, with two nurses supporting him. He walked with crutches, and finally with a stick....

"While in hospital, András wrote nice, jolly letters home, with not a word about his illness. The Hungarian Embassy wanted to arrange for his return home, but András flatly refused, he said: 'I studied in the Soviet Union, I fell ill here and here I'll get well and graduate.'

"He asked his visitors for university news, questioned them about the latest films and the more exciting football matches, and described it all in detail in his long letters home. The Embassy wrote to Budapest, however. András's father was invited to the ministry and told that his son had been in hospital for some time, that he was in the hands of the best specialists and every-

thing possible was being done. The news was staggering because letters had been coming from András all the time.

"And that was the end of András's white lie.

"His parents put a call through to the clinic at once, András was wheeled up to the phone (he could not even sit up at the time) and I heard him shouting cheerfully in Hungarian. I asked him afterwards (much later) what could he have said to them, and he replied: 'I told them I was walking.' "

### **He Made Me Resume My Studies**

"How did we first meet exactly? It is the hardest thing to answer. I tried and tried to remember exactly how it had been, but it was no use. I'll try to remember what really mattered.

"I have told you already that I first heard of him when my doctors saw that in my condition I needed to do some useful work. When at long last I saw it too I asked my friends to bring me all my notes, papers, books, index cards and everything. I was wheeled away to work in a room next door to the one András used for his studies. I sat in my wheel chair, propped up with cushions; the desk was not large enough for all my books and papers, so more tables were pushed up and I 'travelled' from one to the other.

"I had been working thus for two hours. There was so much I did not have handy, for instance, Slavonic dictionaries or the dictionary of ancient Russian which could only be had at the Shchedrin Public Library. I understood well enough that even putting in shape what I had written before was an ambitious task. Still, I was not doing very well. My resentful thoughts went back to 'that Hungarian' again and again, 'who was having a much easier time'. He had no need of archives or volumes the size of mine which, in my condition, I could not read properly, let alone shift. Can you understand how I felt?

"Suddenly I heard a wheel chair coming down the corridor. It was András on his way to 'his' study. He had to pass my door. It was open, and he stopped, surprised to see another wheel-chair patient busy studying.

"Why, you must be the post-graduate student they told me about?" he asked with a very friendly smile.

"I did not have the slightest wish to start a conversation with him. I actually hated him because without knowing it he had forced me to resume my studies, depriving me of my peace of mind. I was quite sure then that my attempt at work would prove futile. He went on to his room, seeing that I was not going to talk to him. ('You did not even smile,' he told me afterwards.) For about a week we worked in our rooms and never spoke to one another. Well, and then, I've told you about it already, I offered to run over his first two chapters with a 'philologist's eye'. And after that we studied in the same room. We began to talk about everything under the sun. But sometimes my natural reserve would get the better of me and he sensed it. We would sit for hours over our books uttering not a word."

### We Became Friends

"Once, after a lumbar puncture, I felt so sick and my spine hurt so that I did not go to my classroom for several days. When I got better, I was wheeled out into what we called the Botanical Gardens—it was that part of the wide corridor where the large windows faced the Botanical Gardens. Soon, he was brought there too and seemed glad to see me. 'Heavens, at last! I was so worried wondering what was wrong, why did you not come to study. I could not concentrate on my books. I asked the nurses but they would not tell me.'

"And so we became friends.

"Before my illness I used to go and see all the football matches. And so naturally Zenith's defeat distressed me, though I admired Spartak's game. András thought Hungarian football was in a class by itself.

"In my last letter I told you that we used to discuss music. That's not right, I ought to have said: 'We used to think about music together'. Music can't be discussed (I, for one, can't, nor can he.) You can think about it together, listen to it together, but discuss—no.

"He adores Liszt (particularly his Second Hungarian Rhapsody). He often used to say: wouldn't it be lovely to hear it together? He worships Beethoven. He could talk about him for hours, about him as a person. (After seeing the film *The Unfinished Story* in Hungary, he wrote me about it excitedly, and there was a line: 'Have you noticed he had Beethoven in his room?' He had a small bust of Beethoven, I did notice it.) His third favourite composer is Tchaikovsky. He did not talk about him much, but when he listened to him he seemed to glow and looked away to hide the emotion in his eyes. We often used to sit on the sofa in the corridor, put on our ear-phones (radio is not allowed in the hospital, but you can use ear-phones with the doctor's permission) and listen to concerts. We did not speak, we sat thinking our own thoughts (actually, we must have been thinking the same things), and then one of us would say—more often than not it was me—"Isn't it time we went home?" And we'd go 'home' and only talk about the concert we had heard the following day.

"Together we read Paustovsky. The volume we had did not include his story 'Snow'. I had once heard it on the radio and I very much wanted András to read it. I did not venture to tell him the story: could one render the music of words? In one of his letters he said: 'I came across "Snow" yesterday, but in Hungarian. I did not read it for fear that the translation might be poor. I'll try to find it in Russian.' Later he wrote: 'I have just read "Snow". It's like Tchaikovsky's Barcarole.'

"We had four names that we held sacred: Julius Fučík, Nikolai Ostrovsky, Ernst Thaelmann and Arkady Gaidar (the last András simply adores). In one of his letters he wrote: 'To the four I am adding Musa Jalil. If his poems are on sale, do send me a volume.' I did, and added one other name: Mate Zalka. He agreed.

"He is crazy about Leningrad, he used to go on talking about it for hours, and his one dream was to take a stroll down the streets of Leningrad again. When he wrote to me about the film *The Unfinished Story* he said: 'The views of Leningrad tore a sob from my heart. So much is associated with it, I love it so, and I had to leave without taking a last walk there."

## Honesty Verging on Hardness

"It is difficult to write about somebody. I've been thinking all yesterday and today: what is the most important thing about András? It is not easy to answer this. Sometimes I can't see the main thing for trifles (though these trifles are not trifling for me). I believe I know now, after all these months of reflection, that the main thing about him is his honesty.

"Yes, it is. Always—in big things and small. Honesty verging on hardness. Honesty that knows no mercy. I suppose it's this that makes me so sure of him. Once he has said or written something it's meant. He is too honest to resort to embellishment or exaggeration even if it's the smallest thing. He'll never do that. Oh, we've known quite a few bitter moments simply because he is so honest. The voice of experience prompts you sometimes: 'Use a little cunning, come on! There's nothing really wrong in it, but then you'll get round this sharp corner safely!' He could not do it. Oh, how we both bruised ourselves against those sharp corners in our letters!

"To be quite frank, I sometimes longed for him to write me: 'Come, don't think about it. Just come.' That's what every girl wants. But . . . there is always a but. He wrote me instead: 'Of course, for all my resoluteness, the problems you raised in your letter are still my problems too. The fact that you will have to leave your friends and your home so far behind, and the difficulties a situation like that invariably involves, cannot but worry me. And it is you I am worried about. Will you be happy here? Will I be able to make you feel at home and be as happy, cheerful and contented as I want you to be? I never tried to appear better off than I really am or to gloss over the difficulties. I may even be exaggerating the difficulties, and once again for your sake. I can't be selfish, I love you more than that. To tell you only the good things about my people, my country and myself, to induce you to come is more than I can do, and then you would not want it that way either.'

"I think honesty is one of his main qualities, if not the main one.

"He is not afraid of appearing funny or sentimental. You know how it is sometimes, fear of appearing sentimental makes a young man put on a mask of hardness and hide some lovable quality of his. But András was not afraid. I remember how stirred he was when he spoke of Budapest and going back to it from the Soviet Union. I could picture his train crossing the frontier, and the joy he would feel seeing his native fields, hearing his native speech. . . . He would be looking out of the train window, with the wind tousling his hair. . . . He spoke so unaffectedly, sincerely and tenderly of it. His love for Hungary needs no confirmation."

### **Fortitude and Extraordinary Will Power**

I was equally interested in Marina and András. I considered both of them "real" people. When Marina left for Budapest I was naturally eager for news from her. I wanted to know all about them, their first meeting, their wedding and everything. But no letters came.

Her silence was easily explained: a new life had begun for Marina, she had no time for letter-writing now. I received a glowing post-card from her when she had been married about a month, and a month after that—a real letter. She was in love with András, with his parents, who had welcomed her as though she were their own daughter, with the hard-working Hungarian people, the beautiful city of Budapest, and the country as a whole.

She wrote about the heated debates and discussions held in Budapest in those October days of 1956. András had been elected secretary of the Institute Party Organisation, he was up to his ears in work and hardly ever came home. Marina was to start work on November 1st either in the Russian language department of the university or in the Slavonic section of the Academy of Sciences.

Since my readers wanted to know more about Marina and András I flew to Budapest in May 1957. From the verandah of the Budapest airport building—which is perhaps the most beau-

tiful in Europe—I saw someone waving a bunch of red peonies. I was not absolutely sure then that it was Marina, but I had a feeling that the woman was waving to me. She did walk up to me—a young woman of medium height with keen, flashing eyes.

"Are you my correspondent?" I asked, though the question was superfluous since she had already called me by name.

"Yes, it's me. Why? Are you disappointed?" she said, laughing.

I had naturally formed an image of her in my mind, just as every reader had probably done, and though she was better looking than the snapshot of her I had seen, she was not quite what I had expected her to look like. . . . András, on the other hand, fitted my mental picture of him perfectly. Marina had painted a life-like portrait of him for me.

### **The Newlyweds Are Happy**

The newlyweds told me about their life, their work and their plans. András is a historian, he works at the institute where he is still the secretary of the Party Organisation; he is also active in social work. He frequently goes into the provinces to deliver talks. Marina is teaching Russian at the university and is at the same time perfecting her Hungarian.

András's parents treated Marina like a daughter; his mother soon taught her the intricacies of spicy Hungarian cooking, and his father, a lathe-operator of many years experience at one of Budapest's factories, tried to be as helpful as he could. Although the parents had provided the young couple with everything—both furniture and crockery—they had bought some pieces with their own money.

Watching Marina and András as we sat and talked I knew they were happy, their marriage was beautiful and fine. They have the same interests and aspirations, their love has stood the test of suffering and separation, and that makes a marriage truly beautiful.

When András is sitting down or just standing not even the keenest observer could detect any trace of the illness he had suffered in either his strong body or his energetic, ever smiling face.

He looks a cheerful young man who loves life and his own job in it. It is only when he is walking that a shadow seems to fall on his expression. And to think that on these crippled legs, leaning on his wife's shoulder with one hand and on a stick with the other, he had covered several kilometres during the counter-revolutionary riot in order to get in touch with his friend, a Communist who lived in Kerut, a district where the fascists were committing their abominable outrages. . . .

In August 1958, Marina and András flew to Moscow to stay with me. I met the TU-104 at the Vnukovo airfield. There they were, my two dear friends, the tall András leaning on the shoulder of his small wife.

The day after their arrival I took my guests to the editorial office of *Znamya*, the magazine in which Marina's six letters first appeared, and introduced them to the editor-in-chief Vadim Kozhevnikov, the writer, and my colleagues who wanted to meet them.

I tried to persuade Marina and András to give a talk at Moscow University for students who knew them from Marina's letters and wanted to hear more about them. However, the couple were adamant in their refusal to appear in public, especially before such a huge audience. "We are no actors, no celebrities, you know," Marina said. "Now, if you'd invite us to your friends we'd gladly accept. On condition that there are not too many, say ten, no more."

I thought of my friends at the Moscow TV centre and took Marina and András there. I made sure that there would be no more than ten people present—light, sound and cameramen, and that my friends would not be kept longer than an hour. This trick of mine enabled two million viewers in Moscow and Moscow Region to see and hear their friends from Hungary. In the days that followed, whenever Marina and András appeared in the street they were waylaid by eagerly friendly young people; they had to shake dozens of hands and sign scores of autographs.

In May 1959, I received the following telegram from Budapest: "SON ANDREI BORN TO SABOS".

It is time, I suppose, I revealed my heroes' identities. I had called them Marina and András before the publication of the letters had been formally sanctioned by them. "András's" real name is Balint Sabo, and he works at the Institute of the History of the Party at the C.C. of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party. His wife "Marina", or Miliitsa Popova-Sabo teaches Russian literature at Budapest University.

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Readers, young readers particularly, are always looking for someone to model themselves on. It was the same with Marina and András. Julius Fučík, Ernst Thaelmann, Mate Zalka, Musa Jalil and Nikolai Ostrovsky were names they held sacred.

The love story of the Russian girl and the Hungarian youth began at the darkest hour of their lives. Suffering and separation only made their love the stronger and more precious to them, for true love is all-conquering.



# AND LEGEND WAS BORN

*By Olga Bergols*

Among the feats performed by the Komsomol during the Great Patriotic War, there is one that is still not very widely known though it was an extraordinary feat, highly patriotic, humane and beautiful. This was the entire activity of the public service squads of Leningrad's Komsomol youth.

They called themselves fighters, and they really were fighters though they carried no weapons when they went into battle. None at all.

Instead, they carried matches in most cases, ordinary matches handed out to them neither in packets nor even in boxes but

singly. Each one of these matchsticks was worth more than its weight in gold, for gold was least valuable in Leningrad then. Sometimes they carried home-made lighters. Their weapons also included flashlights, the kind that buzz when you press down the switch and the flat pocket kind with small storage batteries, but since there were not enough of these for all, they were in the first place handed out to commanders of squads who led the rank-and-file fighters.

They had no uniform allotted to them by either the army or the navy: they went into battle wearing padded jackets or plain winter coats or skiing suits, and on top of their fur caps they wore woollen shawls with the ends wound round the neck. Only a few of them owned felt boots. These girls could not have known that that particular winter would be so freezingly cold; it was usually so warm and even rainy in Leningrad that buying felt boots would never have occurred to them. And so they felt the cold keenly as they made their way to the front line to meet the enemy.

They were real fighters even though they did not once come face to face with any Hitlerites. Their enemy was death and its ever faithful allies: hunger, thirst, cold, darkness. This death had another name: blockade.

The blockade was begun at the end of August 1941, severing all and every connection between Leningrad and the rest of the Soviet Union. In September, the Badayev warehouses, stocked with an enormous quantity of foodstuffs, were burned to the ground during an air raid. Practically no provisions were delivered to the besieged city, and when the stocks perished in the fire a sharp cut in rations had to be made at once. The rations became smaller and smaller, and already in November every one of us Leningraders was getting his first feel of that unfamiliar and disgusting sensation—gnawing hunger. You could not get rid of the sensation, it made work, thought and movement agonizingly difficult. Early in December people began to swell and turn sallow from hunger, they began to collapse in the streets, freeze to death in their beds—people began to die. January and February 1942 were the grimmest months of the Leningrad block-

ade. In his New Year message, Hitler thanked his soldiers for "achieving a blockade that was unparalleled in the history of the world", and with the arrogance of a true maniac declared that he no longer intended to storm Leningrad since very soon it would "eat out its guts" and "fall at our feet like a ripe apple".

Only a paranoiac, an enemy of mankind, could think of that ugly phrase "will eat out its guts". Having failed to take Leningrad by storm with their superior forces, the Nazis now hoped that the community of the besieged city would fall to pieces, that, disunited and in despair, the famished people with their resistance worn down by cold and darkness would go at each other's throats, would stop working and fighting. The armies which were inside the closed ring with us were hungry too....

But the defence of Leningrad—the cradle of the Revolution—was directed by Leningrad Bolsheviks who had the selfless assistance of the Leningrad Komsomol, those younger brothers and sisters of Vasily Alexeyev, Pyotr Smorodin and the other foundation members of the organisation.

It was in those grimiest days when, according to Hitler's forecast, the city was about to "eat out its guts", that the public service movement was started on the initiative of the Komsomol. It was guided by militant love of man in the loftiest sense of the word, but it was called simply a "public service" movement. I want to stress the fact that the squads were formed exclusively of girls and young women who also were the initiators of the movement.

The first of these squads was formed on February 14, 1942, in the Primorsky District of Leningrad.

Oh, that February of 1942! No one who lived through it will ever forget those fiercely cold, golden-blue sunsets, those parks and streets where everything was covered with hoar frost—trees, wires and the very walls, dazzling in their snow-white, fantastic, and ecstatically mournful beauty. And along those dazzling streets shuffled the skeleton-like figures of men and women, their faces bluish and swollen and sometimes almost black, weird

masks on many of them with only slits for eyes—knitted masks, black, bright red or blue. Each tiny fibre of wool was covered with hoar frost. The hunched figures moved slowly with uncertain steps, and in their hands they carried a small canteen or a piece of firewood, or pulled along a children's sled with a dead body swathed in a sheet strapped to it. There were more people who could not even shuffle or move at all, and they simply lay in their dark, ice-cold flats. They did not have the strength to go out for bread, to get up and put their room to rights, to light their iron stoves, and so they lay in their beds, dying. Sometimes their dead lay beside them. And sometimes a baby, with life barely flickering in its tiny body, stirred among the dead with small, weak cries.

And it was to bring succour to these people, dying in their flats or in the streets, that the Komsomol girls of the Primorsky District started out that February, the fighters of the first squad to battle with death, to defend life. You will understand now that they *were* real fighters.

They themselves, it must be said, were as hungry and weak as the figures shuffling along the streets of Leningrad. They received nothing for their work, not even an extra ounce of bread or a spoonful of the famous yeast soup, let alone money. They lived on their bread ration of 8.8 oz. a day, and their wages. All of them were working, and as a rule they went out to help their fellow citizens after work, men's work it was in most cases, difficult, wartime work....

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To be more specific, just what did they do? Let the participants answer this question themselves. Their statements are so terse and matter-of-fact that I shall have to amplify them again and again.

Here is an excerpt from a report made by the Komsomol squad of the Primorsky District on their work.

"On February 14, 1942, a district Komsomol public service squad was formed on the initiative of the district Komsomol committee and with the support of the district committee of the

C.P.S.U.(B.) and the district Executive Committee. This squad was formed of the most active girls in the district, whether Komsomol members or not.

"To begin with there were 42 girls, but by the end of February the squad numbered 80. It was then divided into groups of 10 people each. A commissar was appointed. HQ was set up at the district committee of the Komsomol to direct the work.

"The fighters went from one block of flats to the next, talked to the care-takers first and then made the rounds of the flats. They did not miss a single flat or room in their effort to ascertain the people's urgent needs.

"The district committee of the Communist Party and the district Executive Committee allotted us some delivery orders for firewood, several hospital beds, a number of admission cards to children's feeding centres, and accommodation for a few in children's homes.

"We got hot meals from a specially organised Komsomol soup kitchen to take to the sick, and also obtained provisions for them with their ration cards.

"Our girls did whatever needed doing no matter how physically hard the work. They delivered firewood from the lumberyards, cleaned the rooms for their sick tenants, brought them hot meals and provisions, went and got salaries, pensions and ration cards for them, and so on.

"Working daily, we investigated 165 apartment houses with a total of 13,810 flats, in a period of three months. In the course of five days alone we delivered firewood to 275 tenants and brought hot meals to 780 people. Medical assistance was rendered to 520 people by a doctor and by members of the squad's first aid."

And that is what they wrote of their work. A matter-of-fact report. . . .

They also helped to evacuate the children from Leningrad. Do you know just what it meant getting the children away when the blockade was at its grimmest? There was only one railway station, the Finland, from which they could be sent off. That was where Lenin arrived in 1917. Lenin's statue, boarded up and

covered with earth, rose like a huge mound in front of the station. But everyone knew that under the protecting earth stood Lenin, that his hand was stretched forward and his cap was thrust into his pocket, and that the words he had said then were inscribed on the base: "Long Live the Socialist Revolution in the Whole World!" The girls who were helping to evacuate the children, sending them off in trains from that one and only possible railway station, knew it too, but they could hardly stop and think about it in the stress of the moment. The children were crying, they were frightened. They had to be comforted. They had to be seen off with motherly tenderness from the city of Lenin, for they were orphans.

The report says: "Investigated so many flats, so many floors".

But do you know what it meant? Climbing up the stairs the girls would ask one another in a whisper: "Can you make the stairs? To what floor?" The answer would sound apologetic: "The second."

No one could blame the girl: making the second floor in the spring of 1942 in Leningrad was a feat in itself, because each step up was a step nearer death. It took courage and skill to walk up our stairs, ice-clad and slippery with spilled and frozen slops—those sumptuous front staircases of a bygone day.... I don't know how best to tell you just how it was. Suddenly your heart would fail you, and you could not go a step further.

I am not piling up horrors. I simply want to say that when a Red Army soldier went into attack with a tommy-gun there was, at that precise moment, an ordinary Leningrad girl carrying a kettle of water up those slippery, ice-clad stairs to relieve the dying with some good hot tea—a frail old woman, or a scientist whose works though unknown to her meant much to the country, or perhaps a small boy.... She climbed those stairs to light their stoves for them and make them some hot tea. And it was all part of that great, common battle the people were fighting.

One often comes across words like "lighted his candle for him" or "lighted the stove" in the documents describing the work of the public service squads. These words mean that someone good, a Leningrad girl, had walked into a room where darkness had

reigned for many days and where a human being lay dying under a pile of icy clothes, and had relieved his sufferings by lighting the stove for him, giving him some tea, and taking care of him. And the dying man understood that he was not neglected, that he was not alone, he was together with the community, with the whole vast country, with Russia, that he was not lying there dying but that he too was fighting, and that as soon as he got a little strength back he would fight harder still, he would live.

The girls carried light—a few matches, a little fuel for the stove, some oil for the lamp or a candle; but the most important thing they brought in with them was the light of their own hearts, big and human. There is nothing stronger in the world than that light.

Word of the Komsomol public service activities spread through the hushed city of Leningrad, to people who had no means of communicating with one another, to the armies that had been encircled with them. It was not fame, it was something greater and warmer. By what unknown channels the news travelled no one knows. Whoever needed help or moral support—actors, teachers, workers, housewives and children—now appealed to the public service squads.

The girls had to render a special service to the soldiers. Though stationed on the outskirts of the city where once there had been a tram terminus, they had lost track of their families, and now they asked the girls to find their whereabouts and let them know. The fighters of the public service squads went in search of the soldiers' families through the beautiful, icy streets, they went into dead houses, pushed open doors, and.... They wrote to the front line. And the front line was where the tram used to run. If the family were dead, they worded their reply with caution and care to spare the soldier this one wound at least.

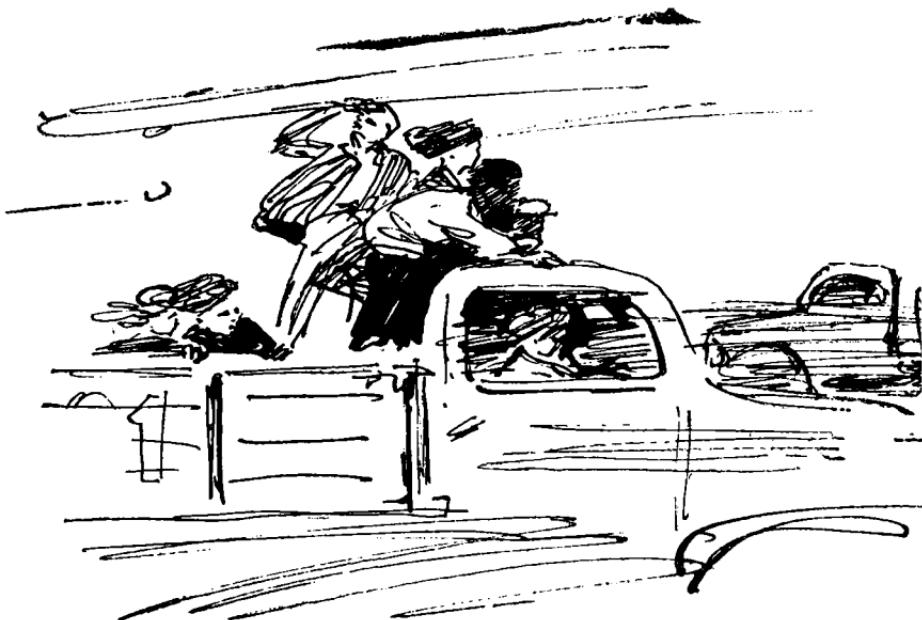
They called themselves fighters, these girls. But it was the soldiers who went under fire, who struck down the enemy, whom they considered the real fighters and heroes by far superior to themselves. True heroism is not conscious of itself, it does not turn attention upon itself. A true hero, performing a deed that will

afterwards be called heroic and will become a legend, performs it simply because he cannot live or act differently. It was the same with the Leningrad girls. Their hearts bade them go to the sick and the dying. They could not help going. Yes, of course, their heroism was neither unique nor accidental. It was a stage, a link, a step in the infinitely splendid and infinitely difficult road traversed by our entire people. Be that as it may, even if they were not heroes but just real fighters, shall we say, their names, every single one of them, ought to be found out and written into the glorious records of feats performed by the Komsomol.

All this had nothing in common with the Salvation Army. The primary task of the girls who visited those hushed Leningrad homes was to organise the people into a collective effort and not merely to bring them charity. If they saw untidiness in rooms owned by comparatively healthy women, they gave them a warning and set a date for cleaning up. And in communal flats they made it a duty for the neighbours to look after someone who was helpless and weak from hunger. And they saw to it, too, that the duty was fulfilled.

No, their work had no resemblance to the Salvation Army's at all. They maintained an all-round defence, enlisting anyone who was strong enough to render physical aid and, above all, moral support to those who needed it.

I have already said that they received nothing for their work, not an extra spoonful of yeast soup, not an extra ounce of bread, not a ruble, and that they were as hungry and weak as all the other citizens of Leningrad whom they saved. What they had was youth and fitness, strong nerves and will power. They believed in good. They were good and therefore they were courageous. Because it is only the good people who are truly courageous, people who want to protect others, to shield them with their own bodies. And goodness was implanted in them by our Party and the Komsomol.



## SCHOOL CERTIFICATE

*By Kamil Devetyarov*

C

### The Form 10-D Eastward Bound

Can any of us forget our school years and that last spring term with the school certificate exams drawing ever nearer, with every passing day bringing us closer to the threshold of a new life—both frightening and thrilling?

What to be? In the last year at school this question is given a lot of thought, it is hotly debated and made the subject of essays that have long become a tradition. Needless to say,

everyone begins these essays with a reference to Pechorin, to Pavel Korchagin, to the builders of the town Komsomolsk-on-the-Amur or the Kuibyshev Hydropower Station and goes on in the usual way of school essays. They are full of lofty notions and exclamation marks and utterly lacking in anything drawn from life's experience. And indeed, how else can school graduates write about life and their chosen careers if all their conceptions are based entirely on textbooks, films and novels?

Raisa Makoyeva did not feel like writing an essay on the subject. At one time she had wanted to become a lawyer, later a journalist's career seemed to her more attractive, and now she was not sure whether an architect would not be perhaps the best choice. And so all she wrote was this: "What do I want to be? I don't know. I'll live and see."

This was extraordinary enough, but it was something else that stirred up the excitement in School No. 6 in Orjonikidze.

Vladimir Kharitonovich Khadayev, the 10-D form master and history teacher, walked into the staff room during break one morning looking very agitated and announced: "D'you know, my pupils staged a riot at the end of the lesson!"

It was not the sort of thing to announce so gladly, but what had happened was this.

The 10-D form was making a study of the resolutions adopted by the 20th Congress of the C.P.S.U. In view of the importance of the material, Khadayev had planned the lesson with particular care. The lesson did in fact begin according to plan with a short report by a boy about the natural wealth of Siberia and the great projects under construction there, and it ended . . . it ended with the entire form deciding to go east to work after graduation.

Throughout break this staggering piece of news was keenly discussed in the staff room.

"Those youngsters look upon work as a stepping stone to get into an institute," said one of the teachers who was considered the sharpest in worldly matters.

"It's just a romantic impulse. The young are apt to get carried away," said the teacher of literature.

"Let them get carried away if they like, but not so far from home," another teacher said. "There are lots of jobs right here in Orjonikidze."

The news was already travelling from classroom to classroom. No sooner did one of the 10-D pupils appear in the corridor than he was surrounded by a crowd of admiring kids—to a senior anyone below the 10th was a kid, of course. The decision to go east found a response in many pupils of the other 10th forms from A to C, and before long the list of those going, compiled by nobody knew whom, included over fifty names.

The alarmed fathers and mothers demanded an explanation from the headmaster. What was he trying to do to their children? He wanted to pack them off to Siberia, did he? It was all that man Khadayev's doing, that was clear to all.

Khadayev was known to many. He was young and full of ideas. He arranged visits to factories and mills, took his pupils on walking tours, and insisted that they learn how to wash their clothes and cook, although no school syllabus ever mentioned it. Khadayev would not leave his pupils alone even during the summer holidays when everyone else relaxed on the beach or played football or something. He was always forming teams of his pupils and taking them to work in the collective-farm fields or on construction sites somewhere or other. Surely school graduates could hope for better things than wielding an axe or a spade?

Khadayev had been the form master of that particular 10-D group since they were in the fifth form, and their decision filled him with happy pride.

Under his guidance they had planted the school garden a few years ago, and when they were in the ninth form they had planted the hedge around the school grounds, made the lawns and the arbours. When, two years ago, it was decided to build an outdoor swimming pool, the then eight-formers were the first to pick up shovel and pickaxe and start digging. Perhaps it was then that Zamira Khasiyeva first considered building as a career and Dzambulat Karginov thought with envy of men building

new waterways across the parched deserts; it was then, perhaps, that they first realised how good it was to be doing useful work with their own hands.

Although the decision of the tenth formers came as a complete surprise to many, actually something of the sort was bound to happen anyway. And it was not all due to Khadayev alone.

Ida Blizhenskaya's mother had been teaching them sewing in their spare time and another girl's mother had given them cooking lessons. Hobby circles had been organised by boys and girls keen on mechanics and they were guided in their studies by engineers and technicians from the Elektrotsink Plant. A close friendship had sprung up between the young workers of the zinc shop and the school seniors. Joint meetings were held, at which both the plan fulfilment of the zinc shop workers and the marks of 10-D were discussed.

Ruslan Boliyev was envied by many because his father was an old Communist, one of the makers of the country's history. He was a frequent visitor to the school.

"You say Ruslan should try for a gold medal?" he said to Khadayev one day. "I agree. But even with ten gold medals to his name a boy has to go and work after school. A pair of toil-hardened hands will add worth to his gold medal when he eventually enrolls in an institute."

And this the pupils of 10-D had understood themselves—they wanted to work, to get some experience of life at first hand, to make sure of what they wanted to be before they took up their higher education.

A meeting of the school Komsomol members approved the decision of 10-D to go to Siberia after the exams. The Komsomol would only send those who passed their exams well. Next, they had to decide where they wanted to go. Siberia was huge and there were hundreds of new projects under construction. Unanimously, they voted for the hydro-power station on the Angara, the largest in the world.

After that, there was a parents' meeting. The "culprits" themselves were not admitted, but there were thirty-four of them listening outside the room to the heated debates.

"We won't let them out until they arrive at the correct decision," one of the boys said, laughing.

They could hear everything perfectly. That was Ruslan's father speaking. Good for him! Other fathers and mothers were not as reasonable. Zamira Khasiyeva's parents flatly refused to let her go. The father of Svetlana and Galina Kostina declared: "My daughters are not going anywhere. They have a ten-year school education, so why should they do any physical work?"

"You're urging our youngsters to go, but you wouldn't go yourself, would you?" a spiteful, jeering voice called out.

"That's not true," Khadayev answered sharply.

"Keep quiet!" hissed one of the listeners outside the door. The pupils crowded closer and grew perfectly still.

"I am their form master and so I am going with them," Khadayev's voice sounded loud and emotional in the tense silence.

The boys and girls jumped and clapped and laughed noisily, forgetting in their excitement that they were not supposed to be there. They fled like a bunch of frightened kids when the door opened.

The graduation exams began. The teachers were very much afraid that the excitement and all those endless meetings were taking the children's minds off their studies. To their relief and surprise the results were amazingly good. Six of the 10-D graduates received gold and silver medals, and the rest did very well.

They were all ready to start when suddenly they received a blow. The Komsomol was not sending any more people to Bratsk. They refused to believe it, it was so unexpected. Why, they were going to build a giant power station on the Angara, they were prepared to move mountains, to conquer the Padun rapids, and suddenly all their plans were dashed. . . .

To clear up what they believed to be a misunderstanding they approached the local Party and Komsomol bodies, and finally appealed to Moscow. The situation was like this, they were told: the Bratsk project had attracted so many people from all over the country, that no more workers were needed there.

After several days of uncertainty and anxious waiting, Khadayev was told that workers were wanted in Kazakhstan, in the town of Aktyubinsk. The youngsters would hardly be overenthusiastic....

Khadayev was feeling rather nervous as he walked to the school where he was to meet his pupils. They had so wanted to see the beautiful river Angara; would they agree to go instead to the waterless Kazakh steppes? Youthful imagination was always stirred by the vastness of Siberia, its forests and mighty rivers, the romance of it.

When he told them his news their faces fell. Someone sighed loudly. No one said anything. They were thinking things over. Where was Aktyubinsk anyway? Was it famous for anything? What were they building there? It was never even mentioned in the newspapers.... Wait a minute, was the romance of distant lands all that mattered? Were all those thousands of young people driven there just by a thirst for fame? At one of their Komsomol meetings these words had been quoted: "No matter where our country sends us, we'll do our jobs, we shall not fail." Were they mere words?

"We're going," they decided.

... It was the summer of 1956. Trains taking young enthusiasts east were leaving all the stations in the country, it appeared. Impetuous, reckless, jolly young people, with their small suitcases and rucksacks, seemed to have flooded the railway stations. There were flowers and music, speeches, songs and tears. Thousands of hands waved in farewell—senile, knotty hands and girlishly graceful ones. How beautiful and expressive hands can be! And from the train windows, hundreds of hands waved back—the palms were soft and tender but already tingling with strength.

Out of the 34 pupils of 10-D, 30 got into the train. Avetisants, the senior in the class, came without his luggage and not dressed for the journey.

Practically half the town turned out to see them off. There were teachers, parents, and younger pupils. Speeches were made. The band blared.

They were off. They could no longer see their home town. The others were settling down and making themselves comfortable, while Zamira Khasiyeva alone stood staring out of the window, seeing and hearing nothing. "Oh, daddy, oh mummy, mummy dear, why didn't you come? Hundreds of strangers came to see us off, but you didn't...." People had kissed her and pushed flowers into her hands, but all her attention had been focussed on the edge of the crowd. Would her father and mother come? They did not.

Valya Sergeyeva was crying softly. Was she sorry perhaps for Avetisyants who sat so timidly in the far corner of the car as if he were a stranger among them? The boys sitting nearest to him turned their backs to him, the rest pointedly ignored him. Avetisyants tried to mumble some excuse in a broken voice, but no one wanted to hear it. The Avetisyants they had known and liked was a brave lad with a ringing voice, and this one was a shifty coward and cheat.... He rode as far as Minvody with them, and when he said good-bye he got no answer.

He stood on the platform for a moment, looking miserable and wretched. Valya saw him brush away a tear before he turned to go, and then the train moved off.

### Aktyubinsk—a Town in the Steppes

They were met with pomp and ceremony. Thirty young workers—all school graduates—was a greater reinforcement than the Aktyubinskstroi had ever yet received. The young boys and girls, many of them still wearing school uniforms, flocked timidly together, overwhelmed by the reception....

The future builders now had to decide what they would specialise in. The boys were naturally drawn to machinery. All of them wanted to operate cranes, excavators, and drive trucks. The girls, on the other hand, could not make up their minds as easily.

Matters were taken out of their hands, however. At that particular moment, there was a shortage of steel erectors, carpenters

and plasterers, and so the boys were to learn the first two trades and the girls the last.

That evening the girls gathered in the small schoolroom and took their seats behind desks which were criss-crossed with initials, names and pictures. Their teacher was a man of about 35 called Shapulin. He had a reddish, weather-beaten face, and looked neat and freshly scrubbed. There was not a wrinkle in his blue, open-neck shirt, and his trousers had been carefully pressed.

The girls learned that plastering was one of the most labour-consuming jobs, and that there were two methods of plastering—dry and wet.

"Look how unattractive a building is before plasterers get to work on it," Shapulin said. "Plastering is a sort of art, I should say."

The girls, busily taking down what Shapulin was saying, paused and looked up when he said plastering was a sort of art, but most of them wrote the words down anyway, followed by a huge question mark.

They were given their first assignment. The house they were to plaster stood at the edge of the settlement. All around it there were mounds of heaped earth, lengths of cable and hose trailed along the ground, and here and there stood some ugly clapboard sheds. The doors and windows were gaping holes. The place was deserted and quiet. The girls jumped a ditch and climbed in through a ground-floor window. The floors had not been laid yet. Broken brick and boards were heaped untidily together, some metal rods stuck out of the walls. It smelt of earth, damp, and something else that was unfamiliar.

One by one the builders arrived, and then the team leader came—a pleasant, talkative man.

"Ours is a simple job, it's not hard to learn, and it's a paying job too, I'd say, if you use your brains of course," he told the new girls.

There were not enough trowels for all of them. "Just look on and get the hang of it," he told the girls, and went away on some business of his own.

When you watched others do it, plastering looked easy enough. All you had to do was scoop up some plaster with your trowel and daub the wall with it. But the trouble was that while experienced plasterers did it beautifully and easily, the beginners had the mixture flying in all directions instead of sticking to the wall. Alla Ivanova was cleverest with her hands, but even with her the daubs of plaster rebounded and simply refused to stick.

The team leader remained with them for a short while and then hurried away.

"Our Yakov is doing a private job of work somewhere again," the older women said.

And so from the very first day the work went in fits and starts, they either ran short of plaster, or there were not enough trowels to go around, or there was some other hitch.

"Never mind, supplies are coming, they're coming," the team leader told them. "Relax.... Give your hands a rest, protect your tender skin. As apprentices you're getting your nineteen rubles seventeen kopeks a day just the same. It makes no difference to our book-keepers whether you've done any work or not."

There are difficulties and difficulties. Back at home people told them: it will be difficult living in the wilds so far away, you may have to live in tents, and the climate is so rigorous. But it had never occurred to anyone that the girls would come up against these difficulties in the person of Yakov Rulev, a "kindly soul" who insidiously planted avarice, shirking and money-grabbing instincts in their innocent hearts.

None of them succumbed to the temptation or accepted Yakov Rulev's philosophy, however, and this they owed to their Kom-somol organisation: together they thrashed out their problems and discussed their difficulties. They talked about life, their attitude to work, and their earnings which would depend on their showings once their apprentice days were over.

Thus they entered life—at once cheerful and worried, romantically inclined yet clear-sighted.

## **Apprentice Days Over**

The boys came back from work with their overalls streaked with rust and torn at the elbows and knees. They scrubbed long and hard at their hands, but even toilet soap would not remove the smell of rusty metal that always clung to them.

Khadayev was also learning to be a steel erector on Yegor Fibler's team. The steel framework had to be made and assembled according to drawings which, though not really complicated, baffled even the best pupils of 10-D. They would all pore over them together and finally appeal for help to their former teacher. It was a matter of pride for them to make out the drawing before their team leader caught them puzzling over it: Yegor Fibler had only had four years at school, yet he could read any drawing at a glance.

All things considered, the young erectors were not doing too badly. But one day they had an accident. Their crane was not working, but the team did not want to hold up the concrete layers, and so they decided to haul up the framework in sections by hand. Khadayev stood on the second floor and handed the heavy rods to those above him. They were almost through when Khadayev lost his balance and fell down. The boys took him to the hospital.

The stiflingly hot, dusty and windy summer wore on until the end of September, and in a single day the weather changed. True, there was no snow, but winter had come into its own.

Valentin Abashin and Victor Lyashenko were transferred to the team working on the construction of a cooling tower, a giant sieve comprised of many layers through which waste water is drained, cooling off in the process. The two boys had to nail the parts together. There must have been millions of them. It was a simple job but for the height, the wind and the cold. Valentin and Victor tried their hardest; they were new in the team and they did not want to appear inefficient or lazy. It was awkward working with gloves on, and so they did without them most of the time. And then Valentin noticed that every time he drove a nail in there was another sound as of wood knocking on wood.

He drove a nail in again, and there was the wooden sound again. What on earth could it be, he wondered. Suddenly he looked at his right hand—three of the fingers were frozen white and were as senseless as pieces of wood. Valentin hurried down, his tear-filled eyes on his fingers—would he lose them?

The team leader came to his aid and rubbed the fingers hard until he got the blood to circulate again.

Yes, the pupils of 10-D had a hard test to stand in those first winter months.

Ida Blizhenskaya got eczema on her hands. She concealed the pain and discomfort from the other girls. The mood they were in now was to sympathise with rather than condemn someone showing signs of weakening, and Ida realised that the less they had of that the better for all of them. Singing was heard less and less often in the boys' dormitory now. The girls no longer scrubbed themselves as carefully when they came home from work, all they wanted was sleep.

It was one of those dismal nights. Valya Sergeyeva fell across her bed, clutched her pillow and burst into sobs.

"I can't go on," she sobbed. "I can't stand that dead smell.... ugh!" She twitched her body as though flinching from contact with something horrible. Valya always said that the mixture had a carrion smell. "I want to go home," she wailed.

"Go then. Get going," Ida shouted, herself on the verge of tears. "Is that a threat? We won't hold you back."

Svetlana Kostina sat down on Valya's bed and tenderly stroked the girl's heaving shoulder. Svetlana's hands were well-scrubbed, her honey-coloured hair was well-groomed. She was wearing a simple dress but it was freshly ironed; she had also changed into nylons and smart shoes. And yet she had worked as hard as everyone else during the day and was just as tired.

Svetlana had always been one of those frail girls, and she really did look delicate—short, slim and blond. She had not been toughened or coarsened by that job for which she seemed so ill-suited. She was also making the best plasterer of them all.

Valya, comforted and heartened by Svetlana, reported for work together with the others the following morning.

The boys came hurrying out of their dormitory, buttoning up their padded jackets on the way, and merely nodding to the girls in greeting, because they had their mouths full. They never managed to get up early enough to eat a proper breakfast, and so they just stuffed their pockets with bread and ate it on the way.

"What, no time for breakfast again?" Svetlana Lutsenko pounced on Volodya Khomutsky who guiltily thrust what was left of his bread into his pocket.

Most of the boys usually went to work hungry. The girls took it upon themselves to see that they all bought milk at least, if they could not be bothered with cooking.

When Sveta Filayeva wore a hole in her felt boots, Albert Khachkavasyan offered to patch them for her—it would take days to get them repaired in town and going out in leather shoes was unthinkable in the cold. Not Albert alone but Igor Jioyev and Volodya Alkhazov too tried their hand at cobbling. The girls washed and mended their clothes for them, although the boys gradually learned to do many things for themselves. Rudolf Pakhomov and Victor Goryachev, for instance, became such expert cooks that they could rival their own mothers in the soups, goulashes and pelmenis they made.

But all that came slowly and painfully to them. Yury Vasilzhenko, on behalf of his class-mates, visited Khadayev in hospital regularly, and though he said little, the former teacher guessed that the youngsters were having a hard time and knew that he had to speed up his discharge from hospital.

Khadayev returned quite unexpectedly. He was wearing a borrowed overcoat over his hospital pyjamas.

He had run away, it was self-evident....

Letters from home were full of love, anxiety and concern. Such are the hearts of loving fathers and mothers—they know when their children are in trouble, even though they are thousands of kilometres away.

"Are we finding it difficult here? I'll answer this with a question: was it difficult for you in 1918 when, as an eighteen-year-old boy, you joined the partisans? Well, we are having it a thousand times easier," Dzambulat Karginov wrote to his father.

They received parcels from home as well. If it was a box of apples, they would put it on the floor in the middle of the room and empty it in a matter of minutes. If there was some home-made jam in the box, they would have a grand tea party. Getting a pair of woollen socks or gloves and other warm things was the most welcome event. Two pairs of socks were better still—they could be shared.

One day a money order came for one of the girls. The talk it provoked prevented her from cashing it.

"What's this? A money order?" Rudolf Pakhomov, dropping in casually as it were, gasped and whistled.

Next, Abashin knocked. He wanted to borrow Zamira's iron.

"So your parents have sent you some money, have they?"

"Yes they have, and so what?" the girl said resentfully.

"She cried for help, wrote to mummy about how difficult it was here," Zamira Khasiyeva said, looking away.

"I did not cry for help. They just sent it."

All the thirty of them voted on sending the money back home to Orjonikidze. They would not let anyone think they were cry babies. They could manage....

A letter came from Avetisyants. No one felt like opening it, and it was handed to Khadayev without comment. The verdict of his former school friends was harsh: Avetisyants no longer existed for them. And yet, in his letter he was asking them to let him come and work with them in Aktyubinsk.

### A Year Later

Thirty boys and girls. Thirty different characters. What changes did the year bring, how are they working and living now?

. . . The address is 126 Kutuzov Street, Zhilgorodok, Aktyubinsk Region. It is a small two-storey house, neatly plastered and painted, with pretty curtains at the windows. There is a wooden staircase to the first floor which has four rooms. This is where the graduates of Orjonikidze School No. 6 are living.

I was received by Khadayev. He is now teaching at the Aktyubinsk Pedagogical Institute, but he still makes his home with

his former pupils. Walking with a pronounced limp, he showed me around the house.

"This and the three houses near here were built by my young pupils," Khadayev said. "Let us go into the noisiest part first—that's where our wireless enthusiasts live."

You guessed it the moment you went in. There was a tangle of wiring along the corridor walls and a huge loud speaker was nailed to the door frame. There was a two-pood weight lying on the floor. On a table stood a clumsy-looking contraption consisting of tubes, transformers and wires—it was either a wireless set or a recorder. They had put in the radio themselves with points in every room. There were plenty of books in all the rooms, books cluttered the desks, the window sills and the shelves they had built themselves.

"We never run short of reading matter here," Khadayev said. "And not just fiction either."

There were stacks of textbooks on electrical engineering and building on all the desks, there were notebooks, sets of drawing instruments and rolls of drawing paper. This looked like a student hostel rather than the home of carpenters and erectors.

"And that's what it is in fact," Khadayev answered. "All our boys and girls are correspondence students."

They had refused hired help and were doing their housework themselves. Though willing, the boys were naturally unable to make their rooms as tidy and home-like as the girls'.

Avetisyants was here too, Khadayev told me.

... When his friends had left Orjonikidze, Avetisyants applied for admittance to the institute of auto-transport engineers, but failed his entrance exams. He decided to try again next year and in the meantime go through the 10th form again, at night school this time. Although he pretended not to care, his loneliness and his sense of guilt towards his friends weighed heavily on him. He was unhappy, as though he had lost something and could not find it.... He wrote a letter to Aktyubinsk but got no answer.

One day he ran across Yuri Vasilzhenko in the street. Yuri had come home to see his sick father. Avetisyants was afraid Yuri

would snub him. After all, no one had bothered to answer his letter. But Yuri smiled and gave him his hand.

"I'm so glad," Avetisyants said. "How is everyone?"

"They're all right."

"I want to join them. Talk to the fellows, will you. What will they say do you think?"

Yuri did not know. It was up to the fellows to decide.

And so Avetisyants had written another letter. He had watched for the postman every day, but the answer came by wire. It was short and to the point: "EVERYONE EXPECTING YOU COME." He had never before received a message so stirring. Overriding his father's objections and his mother's tearful pleas he had started out at once, reaching Aktyubinsk four days later.

There had been a Komsomol meeting that same night. No one gushed with joy over Avetisyants' coming. He had shown a cowardly streak and had not shared their hardest times with them, and so he need not imagine that they'd think it very noble of him to arrive when all their troubles were things of the past, and life was running smoothly. Avetisyants had yet to prove his worth. . . .

Avetisyants had replied—choking with emotion over the ordinary-sounding words—that he was ready to tackle the hardest job, that he'd do the work of two men, that he would win back their trust and friendship.

He was signed on as a truck driver—he had received his driver's licence while still at school.

. . . Saturday night. The last and shortest working day of the week. A cheerful hubbub of voices comes from every room. Albert Khachkavasyan is already busy with his radio contraption. The loud speaker in the corridor wheezes at first and then lets out an ear-splitting volume of sound.

"We can stand it, but how can Albert?" Valery Bogatchenko says with a laugh. "He listens to the noise of a compressor eight hours a day, and then to this thing in his spare time! I wonder his eardrums don't bust."

Igor Jioyev is busy with his camera, films and chemicals. He wants to take some snapshots tomorrow, Sunday. Anatoly Pyr-

kov, a broad-shouldered young chap with a strong physique who plays on the Zhilgorodok football team and is also a qualified referee, is washing the kitchen sink with soap and water. Someone asked him why use soap and not the special cleanser.

"It's no use, I've tried it," Anatoly replies. "It takes off the paint."

A girl comes in carrying a pair of freshly pressed trousers on her outstretched arms.

"Here you are, our star," she said to Valentin Abashin.

The amateur dramatic circle was rehearsing Boris Gorbatov's *The Youth of Our Fathers* that evening, and Valentin was playing the lead.

In the meantime, dancing had begun. The two-pood weight had been pushed out of the way into a corner. Yes, about that weight. The boys had found it somewhere a year ago, and though every one of them had had a go at it no one had been able to jerk it up with one hand.

"And it's just child's play for everyone now," said Khadayev.

Several couples were dancing on the landing which was rather large.

Alla Ivanova and Vladimir Khomutsky were wandering about the rooms looking careworn. They were leaving for Orjonikidze by plane later that night on a holiday, and the custom here was to ask everyone if they had any messages, letters or parcels they wanted delivered to friends and relatives back home.

If anything, collecting messages and parcels and then spending the better part of a month's holiday delivering them was neither easy nor pleasant, but they all willingly took the task upon themselves. It was always difficult, though, asking Zamira Khasiyeva if she wanted to send anything home since it was an open secret that her parents still refused to forgive her for leaving them. Zamira never spoke about it, but her friends knew how unhappy this was making her.

"We'll call on your people anyway," Alla Ivanova said in a tone that implied: "We'll show them, we know how to talk them round."

Not all of them were in on that particular Saturday night. Galina Kostina, Vera Kharchenko and Galina Slonitskaya were away on holiday. Nikolai Andreyev and Gennady Gubernatsky had gone on a business trip, Khasby Khadayev had been sent to a virgin-land state farm to help during harvest-time. At this precise moment perhaps he was driving his truck, loaded with fragrant Aktyubinsk wheat, across the dark steppe to the elevator.

Suddenly, the music stopped. Albert Khachkavasyan, a house-wifely sort of chap, had an important announcement to make.

"Fellows, there'll be some Chinese-made shirts on sale at the store tomorrow."

In Aktyubinsk, nights are warm in October—still nights with no dust or wind. It is pleasant to stroll about the town, or sit in the garden chatting, singing a song or two, or just day-dreaming.

There is Svetlana Kostina sitting at the open window, staring at the lights in the distance but hardly seeing them. Her expression is both happy and wistful. Two pairs of admiring eyes are watching her from outside, but she does not know it.

They are such nice youngsters, all of them.

"Svetlana, come down," a girl's voice calls her.

"Coming!" Svetlana calls back and, humming a tune, runs down the stairs.

She almost collides with Avetisyants and, laughing happily, says: "Oh, it's you! Look, we made some wonderful soup today, there's some left. Want to try it? It's in the kitchen, in the large pot."

Yes, how was Avetisyants making out? He was true to his promise given at that Komsomol meeting held the day of his arrival at Aktyubinsk, and his showings were never below 200% of his daily norm.

... The hour is late. Everyone has settled down to sleep at the hostel, all but Khadayev. The light is still on in his small corner room.

Thirty school graduates had arrived from Orjonikidze again, they came from different schools and needed shaping into a closely-knit little community. Khadayev was not obliged to worry about them, he simply could not help himself.

Besides, he had to go over his next week's lectures. It was not the same thing as teaching at school and required much preparatory work from a young lecturer.

... The young builders are fast asleep. They have done a good day's work and their sleep is healthy and sound.

On Monday morning, Avetisyants will be the first to leave for work as usual. After that, Victor Lyashenko will drive up to the hostel in the office car—he has recently been appointed the director's driver. He will probably get into trouble if the director finds out that he takes the girls to work every morning on nobody's orders, but he seems willing to risk that.

People get up early in the workers' settlement. They have to be on the job.

And into this stream of confidently striding men and women pour the school graduates of yesterday; young but already sure of their strength, they join the family of workers, they belong together. They are hurrying to work, the town is growing, more houses have to be built, more workshops have to be added to the iron and steel plant they are building in the steppe. There is their job waiting for them. There are many more jobs ready and waiting for their strong, young hands.

# HE CAME BACK TO YOU, RUSSIA



The following letter appeared in *Komsomolskaya Pravda* on January 14, 1959:

*Dear Editors,*

*I decided to write to you about the heroism of a nameless Russian with a noble soul and a great heart. I have in my possession a notebook containing verses by an unknown prisoner of Sachsenhausen concentration camp found in the ruins by Wilhelm Hermann, a German citizen. So far, the identity of the hero has not been established.*

*Judging from the verses, he was put in the camp some time in 1943. At home he had a wife, Nina, and a son. There are just initials for the other names: Iv. Iv., M. F., Kol. The name Salvador Chali also occurs.*

*I was so stirred by this poetry, written by a man who can in all justice be called a brother in spirit of Musa Jalil, that I went to Sachsenhausen at once.*

*Wilhelm Hermann is the young leader of a builders' team working on the former territory of the camp where there is now a museum. I was introduced to him by the other German workers. Wilhelm showed me where he had found the notebook. There used to be a barracks there, but all that has remained is a pile of bricks. The notebook, Wilhelm told me, was wrapped in a piece of rubberised cloth when he discovered it.*

*We were joined by Wladyslaw Stanik, a former Sachsenhausen prisoner who had spent many years in the camp, and was now a guide there.*

*The first thing we went to see was the "torture chamber". It is a brick barracks with small windows close under the roof. Ten or twelve people used to be kept in the cells which measured 2.5 m. by 3 m. In the summer the windows had always been kept shut, it was so stuffy the men could not breathe, and in the winter they had been kept open.*

*"The best people were kept here: Communists and other active fighters for the workers' cause," Comrade Stanik told me. "The prisoners were chained to the floor with metre-long chains. See these hooks in the outer walls? That's where they hung the prisoners when they tortured them: a man had his hands tied behind his back and had to hang on his hands for an hour at a time."*

*"Whenever I see a Russian I feel like baring my head before him," Stanik went on to say. "No matter what torture they had to endure, the Russians were always proud and retained their independent spirit. They were truly courageous people, they were heroes."*

*We visited the place where the members of the Resistance had been executed. It was a fiendish crime. Six condemned men at a time had their feet put in a vice, after which the hangmen put a*

*noose round their necks and with a special winch tore them in two.*

*It was in these unbelievably hard conditions that our compatriot wrote poetry imbued with faith in victory. He was a man you want to bow before. This proud Soviet man lived far from his Motherland but he was with her every day and every minute.*

A. Bugayets,  
First Lieutenant

### THE SEARCH FOR THE AUTHOR BEGINS

We have it before us now, the small notebook that tells the story of a truly noble life. The lines speak of inexorable will, of anger and love, of struggle and hatred. It was almost fifteen years ago that they were written. How to find the author today in the multimillion sea of people swept up in the whirlwind of war and scattered across the face of the earth? How to find him, knowing that many used fictitious names in concentration camps, that the memory of those who had survived the tortures sometimes refused to resurrect the hideous past?

We only had the notebook to go by. We knew the name of the camp. That was all we had. But we began the search hopefully. We were certain that thousands of people would come to our aid, for what honest man or woman could remain indifferent to the heroic feat of those who fell in battle against fascism?

Where to begin? Where the notebook had been found, of course. And so a correspondent of *Komsomolskaya Pravda* went to Sachsenhausen.

### AN INFERNAL WITH A "POPULATION" OF 250,000 THE HANGMEN TALK "I MAY HAVE MET THAT MAN..."

Less than an hour's drive from Berlin brought us to the outskirts of Oranienburg, and to the right of the road, behind a thin pine forest, we saw the tall, stone walls of Sachsenhausen with watch-towers on the corners.

In a plot of ground cleared of the mighty pine forest, the Nazis had built sixty-seven squat barracks that were more like stables, several hospital-like structures where the S.S. doctors conducted their "experiments", deep basements where people rotted alive, a crematorium where they were burned, and a number of gallows. The camp, planned with true German precision, was a prison, a hell-town with a "population" of close on a quarter of a million.

Every day for nine years, from 1936 to 1945, people had been shot, gassed, murdered, hanged and burned here. Every day for nine years until April 23, 1945, when the Soviet Army freed the remaining three thousand prisoners who had survived the ordeal.

Our visit to the camp coincided with the trial held in Bonn of Sachsenhausen's former wardens, Gustav Sorge and Wilhelm Schubert. The atrocities are given in detail in the court records. The two hangmen described their "work" thoroughly and calmly, with revolting frankness. Sorge, for instance, used to take groups of prisoners to the bath-house. It was winter. Unsuspecting, the men would take off their clothes to be suddenly doused with water and pushed out of doors to stand in the cold. About two hours later Sorge would come out to see if they were still alive; if they were, the operation was repeated.

Once a group of Soviet war prisoners was brought to the camp. There were 102 of them, but only a hundred had been expected. The gate was opened to admit a hundred wounded, collapsing men. Two were left outside the gate. Schubert shot them down without even bothering to come out of the lodge: he fired at them through the window. One of the witnesses said he had once heard Schubert bragging to the other warden: "In one night I killed over a hundred Russians, and you only got fifty."

... Paths cut through the deep snow fan out from the gate into the heart of the camp. People come here alone, in twos or threes. Soviet soldiers serving abroad come in groups. In mournful silence they stand before the ruins of the crematorium and the pits where once the barracks had been.

We met the guide A. Bugayets had mentioned in his letter. His real name is Wladyslaw Mirczyński. Stanik is the name by

which he went in camp, and the name by which he is known to those of the Sachsenhausen prisoners who remained alive.

Mirczyński knows Russian. We asked him if he knew anything about the author of the verses found among the ruins.

"You must forgive me for my clumsy speech," he said. "In camp I learned five languages and I mix them up a bit. I learned to speak Russian from two friends, a Russian and a Ukrainian, whose names I don't remember. I almost forgot my own name in the seven years I spent in Sachsenhausen, where I was nothing but a number, No. 18279, a prisoner."

"I'll tell you my own story briefly. I used to be a miner in Westphalia. At twenty I joined the Communist Party of Germany. I did underground work after Hitler came to power. In 1934, the agents of the Gestapo caught me in the act of pasting leaflets on the walls. After four years in prison I was transferred to Sachsenhausen."

"I met my first Soviet citizens towards the end of 1941 when the first party of war prisoners, numbering two thousand, were brought to the camp. Even we prisoners, who had seen plenty, were horrified to learn that all these people had been driven into one barracks intended for two hundred and forty. They were given neither food nor water for four days, and they died by the hundred."

"Later, I came to know some of the Russian war prisoners more closely. One of them was called Pyotr. He was a Leningrad student. He was a real comrade, a man with a strong will. Pyotr, just like the other Russians, refused to be defeated by the Hitlerites. Although their lot was the hardest of all, they went on fighting."

"When the Soviet Army came near enough to Sachsenhausen, Himmler ordered the camp authorities to cover up the traces of the crimes that had been perpetrated here. A considerable number of the prisoners were killed on the spot, and the remainder were driven northward with the intention of drowning them in the Baltic. It was a death march in the full sense of the word. Hungry and cold in our tatters we were forced to walk, the ones who fell behind were shot down. The hundred-odd kilometres

we covered were paved with corpses. Russian, German, Norwegian and other comrades supported one another. We were rescued by Soviet tanks when the Baltic was only a short distance away.

"We were rescued in the nick of time. The Nazis would have finished us off soon. Prisoners of many nationalities were rescued, among them a small group of Soviet war prisoners. My friend Pyotr was one of them. I met him after the war, he was a soldier in the Soviet Army.

"The notebook with the verses found here stirred me as much as it did all of you, as it did all the former prisoners of Sachsenhausen. Who was that unknown soldier? I may have met the man but then something like twenty thousand Soviet war prisoners went through this camp, could I remember every one of them?"

To our regret, Stanik's story gave us no clue at all. Twenty thousand war prisoners. One of them was the author. One out of twenty thousand....

He had been a man of inflexible will, an ardent patriot. He had carried his love for his country through torture and death. Maybe that same sadistic warden Sorge had told him: "run" and then fired at his back and killed him "while attempting escape". Maybe they had hanged him three times? Twice the noose had been slipped round his neck, twice this Soviet man had flung into the enemy's face his proud conviction that his country would come through victorious, and twice the rope had broken. When, for the third time, the noose had tightened round his neck he had again found the courage to cry out: "Long Live Soviet Russia!"

The name of this hero remains unknown. The name of the poet has not been discovered yet....

We went to the exact spot where the notebook was found. We were introduced to Wilhelm Hermann. With all his heart he wanted to help us, but what could he know? All he could tell us was that a corner of the notebook, wrapped in rubberised cloth, had been showing among the pile of bricks which was all that remained of the barracks.

"Do you know that there was a book of drawings by a Swedish artist hidden in the attic of this very barracks?" Stanik suddenly said, joining us again. "A little while ago he wrote to the Government of the German Democratic Republic asking for a search to be made for his drawings in which he had depicted the horrors of concentration camp. But the barracks had already been pulled down when the man from Berlin arrived here to search it. I remember it was towards the end of last summer."

At our request, the Anti-Fascist Committee found the letter and made a new translation of it. It transpired that it was not a Swedish artist at all who had written the letter and, moreover, it had not been addressed to an official organisation but simply to a friend, a fellow prisoner of Sachsenhausen. What mattered, though, was that the letter actually existed, and this is what it said:

*Dear friend,*

*As I have already told you, I have sketched a plan of the kitchen barracks in the Sonderlager from which you can see where the notebook with the verses by that Russian poet who was in Sachsenhausen is hidden. I have marked the spot with an "X" near the wall, it's under the floor boards. If you are going to write there, send them the plan.*

*Yours cordially, Martin Gausle.*

Need we describe the excitement this letter caused in our editorial office? We rang up Oslo at once and asked our Embassy to send someone to the address given in the letter. Martin Gausle lived in a village not far away. Two hours later Oslo rang back and we were told what Gausle had said.

"Only three people knew about the notebook: myself, a Russian doctor called Stepan who died in the last days of war, and another Russian war prisoner called Tilevich. It was from Tilevich that I got the notebook. He told me that he had received it from a comrade of his, but he gave no name. I hid the notebook when I was fixing the wiring. It was either late in 1944 or early in 1945."

Contrary to expectation, we located Mark Grigoryevich Tilevich without any trouble at all. He had settled down in Moscow after the war and actually lived down the street from our newspaper offices.

"I used to work with him in the Sonderlager," he told us when he heard about Martin Gausle. "In the same squad with us there was a doctor, Stepan Gun, who died on Liberation Day, Wahid Rakhmanov, a teacher from Uzbekistan, Victor from Stalino and Vladimir from Rostov, whose surnames I don't remember, and also Alexander Borodin and Boris Vinnikov—both living. Martin was our chief electrician. Yes, I do remember we hid some notebook or other. But, do you know," Tilevich said with an apologetic smile, "after all I had been through I can't always vouch for my memory. I wish I could have a talk with Martin himself."

We rang up our Embassy in Oslo again, and they promised to send a car for Martin Gausle so he could speak on the telephone to Tilevich.

"Hello, Martin, it's me, Mikhail," Tilevich shouted gladly into the telephone.

"Mikhail, you! What's new?" he asked in Russian.

"The notebook you once hid in Sachsenhausen has been found."

"Yes, I know."

"Martin, are you sure it was poetry? I seem to remember that it was notes made by our friend Stepan Gun and not poetry at all."

"No, no, it *was* poetry. Remember, you once brought to work a dark-red notebook of German make, checked, about fifteen by twenty centimetres? Remember how you Russians—you, young Victor from Stalino and Stepan Gun—stole to the attic to read the poetry? Try to remember. You told me that the poetry belonged to a Russian soldier and you could not keep it about. Do remember! After reading it you decided that it had to be kept safe at all costs."

"Wait a minute, I believe I'm beginning to remember."

"And then you asked me to hide the notebook and, if none of you lived, to find it after the war and send it to Russia. I did

what you asked me. I wrapped the notebook in a piece of rubberised cloth, and hid it under the floor boards of the Sonderlager kitchen that was being built then."

"Yes, I do remember reading the verses in the attic. But I don't remember who gave them to me."

"Try! You told me then the author was your comrade. What a pity I didn't ask his name at the time. Maybe I would have remembered it. Well, Mikhail, I wish you and your comrades every success in your search."

And as if in answer to this, we made our first find.

**OUR FIRST FIND**  
**A SONG COMPOSED BY ZINA GOLUBEVA**  
**IVAN WAS A BIG MAN**

Among the other verses in the notebook there was this one, called *The Song of Girls in Ravensbruck Concentration Camp*.

*We live on an island near Berlin  
With little but water around.  
A prison-camp serves as our dwelling  
Which terrible walls surround:  
Two dozen and six wooden barracks,  
A kitchen, a morgue, and a bath.  
It's cold, but the women go barefoot  
Out on the concrete path.  
They wake us at four in the morning,  
We gulp down a cup of warm mush,  
Then they drive us for the check-up,  
And off to our work we rush.  
Neither idlers are we, nor shirkers,  
But, work for our torturers? No!  
We sing and we try to look cheerful,  
Our hearts almost bursting with woe.  
Heads up, Russian girls, have courage,  
Be Russians, whatever befall!  
The day of our rescue is nearing,  
And home we shall go, after all!*

After the verse had been published, we received a phone call from Sophia Anvayer, a doctor working at one of Moscow's hospitals, who told us that the author was Zina Golubeva (Kudryavtseva).

Zina Golubeva had been a prisoner in Ravensbruck, but the notebook had been found in Sachsenhausen. How did the verse find its way into it then?

A few days later we received a letter from Zina Golubeva herself.

"I cried when I read your paper," she wrote. "I was given fifteen lashes with the whip for writing that verse, and besides I had to stand in cold water for three days."

Zina had never imagined she was a poetess, of course. In 1942, she had been seized in her home near Leningrad and deported to Germany. She had refused to work in a factory, and so she had been sent to work in a prison kitchen. She found out that some prisoners were planning to escape, and slipped them an extra ration of bread. Some of them were caught, and the fascists forced them to name the person who had given them the extra bread. Zina was arrested. She went through four different prisons before they brought her to Ravensbruck in March 1942, and gave her a striped dress with the No. 15690 and the letter *R* on it. Zina was eighteen at the time and the thought of dying so young and in enemy country was horrible.

In January 1943, on the anniversary of Lenin's death, she organised a memorial meeting in one of the barracks. Party members were invited, and they shared their recollections of Lenin with the others. They sang the "Internationale" under their breath. An air-raid warning dispersed the meeting. Inspired by that gathering, Zina had written her song which was afterwards sung by all the Russians in Ravensbruck from where it spread to the other concentration camps.

"You are wondering how my song found its way to Sachsenhausen. It was very simple," Zina continued. "The men's section of the camp was behind ours, and for all the guards' vigilance we used to correspond with our war-prisoner friends. We'd write a note, wrap it round a stone, and throw it over the wall.

We used to sign with a watchword, we did not know each other's names although we wrote quite often, sharing what news we had from the front, verses and songs.

"Once I received a note signed 'Ivan', warning us that the Gestapo were planning to kill off a large group of prisoners. I thanked him, signing my note 'Iskra'. The next note I got from Ivan had a verse, it was signed 'Ivan' and there was a five-pointed star drawn below it. I sent him my song and again signed 'Iskra'. In the last note I received from Ivan he told me that he was to be taken away and asked me to keep his poetry for him. I circulated it among the prisoners. This time the note was signed: 'Ivan, star, thorn.' I heard nothing more from him. His notes and the verse were taken away from me when I was searched before going into the punishment cell. Ivan always wrote: 'Don't lose your pride and courage, deliverance will come.' Ivan was a big man."

#### **UNDERGROUND POETRY-WRITING IN SACHSENHAUSEN**

The following letter addressed to the editorial board came from I. S. Nekhayev, a teacher.

*The page in Komsomolskaya Pravda entitled "He Came Back to You, Russia", stirred me not simply because I was once a prisoner in Sachsenhausen. I do not know if this letter of mine will shed any light at all on the mystery of the poetry dedicated to our Motherland with a love so great, but I am writing it anyway.*

*In the autumn of 1944, about three hundred of us, men of different nationalities with some Germans among us, were brought to Sachsenhausen from the Alexanderplatz prison in Berlin. I was given a six-digit number and a red triangle to be sewn to the front of my coat. (That was the way they marked political prisoners in camp.) Practically all the people I came across had six-digit numbers like mine, except one who had the number 14 and a green square instead of our red triangle. Later, I learned that No. 14 was a German prisoner, doing a life term for murder and robbery, and sent to Sachsenhausen to act as executioner.*

*I foolishly asked the veterans of the camp where the first hundred thousand numbers had gone. For answer, they silently indicated the black smoke rising from the crematorium chimneys.*

*After the barber had clipped our hair with a pair of blunt scissors we had an ice-cold shower and climbed into the top tier of plank-beds in the quarantine barracks. The beds were a wooden box, something like a coffin without the lid. There were three of us in the box: a Moldavian, a German, and myself, a Russian. The sides of the box, polished by the hands of our numerous predecessors, were covered with inscriptions in different languages. There was a warning in Russian: "Remember this is Sachsenhausen! Don't talk." And there was a familiar one in French: "Liberté, égalité, fraternité." We found a very curious inscription on the headboard. There was the word "Prayer" in blue pencil, and a verse below:*

*I pray to you daily and nightly,  
Have mercy, O Lord, on mankind,  
May the doom of Adolph Hitler  
By your punishing hand be signed.  
Come, Lord, to the ailing and lowly,  
Come, grant us an end to this war.  
Almighty! Come to our succour,  
Save the world from its sufferings, or...  
I pray, but my heart is silent,  
Wrath rides o'er my prayer roughshod:  
O, for a chance of vengeance!  
A curse on both Hitler and God!*

*It was unsigned. Who was the author? Where was he? And was he alive?*

*I love poetry, literature and art. In the Alexanderplatz prison it had been a practice with us Russian prisoners to give talks, lectures and readings of poetry by heart. Our thirst for knowledge did not slacken even in those awful conditions. I remember a Czech prisoner dying in our cell after being tortured savagely. After they had carried out his body, we had our*

*daily lecture, which we made it a rule to hold. That day we heard about the work of blooming mills, and we listened as if it were a poem singing the daring of human intellect. After that we read poetry in Russian and German. The walls and window bars seemed to melt away and we saw a beautiful vision of our wonderful Motherland.*

*We carried on the practice in Sachsenhausen. Someone would be giving a talk as we lay in our plank-beds, or as we were being drilled for long, exhausting hours in the yard, or again as we were cleaning up and removing our dead.... These talks raised people's spirits. Once, when I had finished telling them about Valery Bryusov, I heard someone say from the bottom tier: "I feel like a human being again."*

*We often listened to poetry written by our fellow-prisoners, the verses for the most part were raw though very sincere, but some of them were wonderful. I remember a prisoner of medium height with sparkling brown eyes, he was about thirty, and there is nothing in particular I can say about his looks, but that is perhaps because our shaven heads and striped blue-and-white clothes had deprived us of any individuality. This man recited some poetry, he was terribly nervous and shy. He did not say he was the author. But I think we all knew he was.*

*I do not know his name. Everything had a number in camp: barracks, SS-guards' submachine guns, and people. Many of the prisoners used fictitious names. In Sachsenhausen I for one was called Ivan Ivanovich, though I have a different patronymic. I have read in your paper that there is a verse dedicated to Ivan Ivanovich in the notebook of the unknown soldier, but I don't think it was me; we had plenty of Ivan Ivanovches in camp. And besides, I only spent a few months in Sachsenhausen—the end of 1944 and the beginning of 1945. I was accused of spreading Bolshevik propaganda again and sentenced to life. I had been to three concentration camps after Sachsenhausen. The last one was Belsen, from where I was taken to a Soviet hospital suffering from distrophy and weighing 37 kilograms.*

\* \* \*

Here is another letter from A. Bugayets.

*Dear Editors,*

*I hasten to send you this second letter of mine. My friends and I now believe that identifying the unknown hero may prove much easier than we had supposed at first. In one of the verses, which had escaped our attention before, the author mentions Rechitsa, his home town. Lance-corporal Builov puzzled over the verse for two days, and finally came to the conclusion that it is an acrostic, the first letters spelling out Anton Parkhomenko, which he presumes is the name of the author. It was only then that we noticed the tiny arrow pointing to the first letters. This is no mere coincidence, we feel sure. We cannot yet say with any certainty whose name it is, the author's or a friend's. It is more likely the author's. I have written to the Rechitsa District Party Committee, Gomel Region, to check on the name.*

*I am almost sure now that the identity of the author will be established.*

The following poetry was enclosed in the letter:

#### *MY HOME TOWN*

*Ah, remember those days in the town of our birth  
Near the bank of the Dnieper green,  
The dear old cobbles, the sacred earth  
Of Rechitsa, childhood's scene!  
Nothing more would I wish than to fly like a bird,  
Press my mother and love to my heart,  
And tell them of all I have suffered and heard,  
Rest and love till all pain depart!  
Keen as ever, as ever alive and hot  
Has that love in my heart remained.  
O believe me, my friend, it is not so long—  
My hand is weak, but my hope is strong—  
Ere liberty be regained.  
Not long must we wait till that joyful hour  
Kind fate must still have in store—  
O, the hour for which all of us yearn and pine—  
The hour that will end the war!*

It was true. Reading the first letters down made a name--Anton Parkhomenko.

... Since reading the *Komsomolskaya Pravda* the small Bye-lorussian town on the bank of the Dnieper has been excitedly quoting and discussing the stirring poetry of the unknown author, eagerly collecting information to help identify the poet....

Now that the acrostic had yielded the name Anton Parkhomenko, the end of the trail appeared in sight. We believed that the mystery would be cleared up once we had spoken to Anton's parents and childhood friends, and seen the fields and copses that had inspired a love so tender in the poet's heart for his Motherland, for his native countryside.

And so we went to see Anton's parents in Zalesye. It was Sunday, and we found them in. We asked them to tell us about Anton.

It was probing their wound, of course, and making them live through their tragedy again, but we had to do it. Anton's mother kept brushing away her tears.

Anton was born in 1920, she told us. Collectivisation began in these parts in 1935. Her husband was not a wealthy farmer, and one would have thought that joining a collective farm was the best thing for him, but he put off taking this step for several years. It was then that Anton, a member of the Komsomol, first asserted himself. He tried persuading his father but when he saw words were no use he went and joined the collective farm independently of his parents. His action was dictated by his lofty convictions and not by any desire to quarrel with his parents.

We asked his mother if Anton had been married and if he had ever written any poetry. No, she said, but she could not be sure. There was another son, Vladimir, a schoolteacher in Khakassia, he would know, perhaps. We sent him a telegram and the following day received his answer in which he told us that before the war Anton had never written a line and had not read much either. Well, Anton Parkhomenko was evidently not the author of the verses. He was perhaps a friend of the author's. We had to continue with our search.

A. Golyshev, a journalist, and A. Marchenko, the Rechitsa military commissar, discovered that another verse was an acrostic too, with the first letters spelling out a name again—Ivan Koluzhny. Here is the verse:

*In time our sufferings will end,  
Victorious, Life's torch will burn,  
And all the joys of Youth, my friend,  
No more to leave, will then return.  
Kind time will help our wounds to heal;  
Of love and friendship we will sing.  
Loud, louder, bells of vengeance, peal!  
Untie our bonds and Justice bring!  
Zephyrs of homeland, gently, blow,  
Hail our return to native parts!  
No harder lot did man e'er know,  
Yet hope still lives within our hearts.*

This gave us another clue. We had to look for Ivan Koluzhny as well as Anton Parkhomenko now.

The Rechitsa District Party Committee held a meeting attended by a hundred teachers and graduates of the local school for workers and the teachers' college. S. L. Valner, a teacher, recalled that a boy called Anton Parkhomenko had once gone to school with her. She remembered him perfectly: a fair-haired boy who liked to sing Ukrainian folk songs at gatherings.

This was confirmed by M. Y. Balashchenko, a book-keeper. Anton Parkhomenko had been a class-mate of his sister, he had been very keen on the wall newspaper and had always been the editor. M. S. Rubinchik, a teacher, remembered that the correspondence course students of the teachers' college had shown her their verses once, and one of the students had been called Anton Parkhomenko.

We knew that Anton from Zalesye had never studied at the teachers' college. So this was another thread we had to follow up. But it broke off at once: there was nothing else we could find out about him. It was particularly disappointing in view of the

telegram we received from our editors telling us that they had ascertained from the State Archives of the October Revolution, where some data on Sachsenhausen was kept, that among the prisoners there had been a Parkhomenko.

The district newspaper *Zarya Kommunisma* urgently formed a Komsomol squad to help us in our search. The information gathered, however, was very frugal.

We turned to the verses again trying to find the clue to the author's identity in them. The following lines, written on March 8, 1944, attracted our particular attention:

*For many a day must we suffer apart,  
Yet let us believe in life!  
There is something today that tells my heart:  
I shall meet you, my son and wife.  
The enemy, Nina, is doomed to defeat,  
And nearer with every day  
Is the wonderful moment when we shall meet,  
And how much will we have to say!*

It was obvious that Nina, his wife, and his son were real people, they were not fictitious. The other verses described the Byelorussian countryside, the steep bank of the Dnieper and some features typical of Rechitsa. One could safely suppose that the author had lived in these parts for some time. It was also clear that the author and Ivan Koluzhny were close friends. Not just the acrostic, but other verses too were dedicated to Ivan Koluzhny. One was dedicated to Iv. Iv. and another to Iv. Kol.

Another fact became known. One of our correspondents on assignment in Neuhagen near Berlin met a former Sachsenhausen prisoner—Franz Riess. This man had preserved three lists of prisoners' labour teams, and in one of them there was the name Koluzhny after his number, 101181.

In the summer of 1944, the men, among whom Koluzhny was listed, were transferred to Buchenwald. Unfortunately, Riess, who had gone with them, did not remember what Koluzhny looked

like. But the transfer to another concentration camp fitted in perfectly with the story of Ivan Koluzhny that could be pieced together from the verses. There was one dedicated to Iv. Iv., dated summer 1944, where it said: "You're leaving today.... Be brave on the journey...."

The question was: had Ivan Koluzhny ever been to Rechitsa? The only person who remembered that name was the headmaster of the village school in Rebusy. He thought that before the war Ivan Koluzhny had studied in the Rechitsa teachers' college, the same college our second Anton Parkhomenko had been to. However, that was too vague a clue.

#### MORE NEWS OF IVAN KOLUZHNY

A short while ago we received the following letter from A. Usikov, who had been a prisoner in Sachsenhausen, No. 68203.

*Dear Editors,*

*I hasten to let you know the following. In July 1943, Vasily Zavyalov, a second lieutenant from the town of Kolomna, and I, after attempting to escape from a concentration camp near Küstrin, were locked up in the same punishment cell. After twenty days of brutal torture we were transferred to Sachsenhausen. There I made friends with Ivan Koluzhny, a war prisoner of 25 or so. Willi Tschecher, an old German Communist, introduced us to the underground organisation and we joined in the work.*

*Ivan often recited poetry to me. I remember he once recited the whole of Lermontov's "Demon" by heart. I also heard some poetry about the war from him. Once Koluzhny read for Zavyalov and me a verse about the crematorium, and admitted that he was the author. The poem "I Shall Come Back to You, Russia" I heard from Koluzhny personally in the last weeks of 1943 just before we parted: I was being transferred to another camp.*

*As far as I can remember, Ivan was an officer.*

\* \* \*

So there really had been a Russian, Ivan Koluzhny, in camp. A man of courage, infinitely devoted to his Motherland. He wrote poetry. But was he the author of the verses in the notebook? It was more likely that he was the author's best friend, that they had gone through the horrors of camp together.

It was a pity that Koluzhny was such a common name. The readers of *Komsomolskaya Pravda* had already written in about several Koluzhnys: one Ivan Koluzhny was a driver in Vinnitsa, another was a builder in Sumgait, the third was in the Moscow river fleet, and the fourth had been an army telegraph operator in Byelorussia in 1940. We followed every one of these clues, but the Ivan Koluzhnys we found were not the one we were looking for.

Here is another story the hero of which is a man called Ivan Koluzhny. We heard it from Vladimir Ilyin, a former flier, who is at present working at the Likhachov Automobile Plant as a foreman.

On March 29, 1943, at about 5.30 p.m., the Germans shot down a Soviet plane near Devydovichi, a short distance away from Mogilev. The plane had been piloted by Second Lieutenant Ivan Koluzhny. His death was grieved by all his comrades-in-arms. Ivan had been the Komsomol organiser of the squadron. He used to write patriotic poetry and recite it to his friends. Everyone knew and liked this dark young fellow with the high cheekbones. They refused to believe he was dead. As a matter of fact, one of the fliers who had gone on the assignment with Ivan did say that he saw a parachute opening when the plane was already close to the ground, but whether this was true or not was open to doubt.

When, about a year later, our armies liberated Mogilev, the command of the division in which Ivan Koluzhny had served decided to locate the exact spot where the Germans had shot him down. They found the wrecked plane easily enough, but no trace of the pilot's body was found either in the cockpit or anywhere near the place. However, a few kilometres away the name Koluzhny was found scribbled in pencil on a road sign. Apparently, Ivan really had baled out and had remained alive.

Maybe our Koluzhny *was* the man A. Usikov wrote us about, maybe he was the friend to whom our unknown poet had dedicated his poetry? Maybe, who knows. In any case we had no facts contradicting Ilyin's surmise.

We did have something supporting this surmise, though. There was the poem "Death of a Hero" which was definitely written by someone connected with aviation.

### WHAT SALVADOR CHALI TOLD US

We rang up our Embassy in Paris, and asked them to locate Salvador Chali, a French patriot, to whom the unknown poet of Sachsenhausen had dedicated one of his best verses. We wondered if he was alive, this good friend of a Soviet soldier? What was he doing now? Organisations uniting the former fighters of the Resistance and the *Humanité* promised to help.

However, the first to get a clue to Salvador Chali's whereabouts was a Soviet citizen, S. P. Zykov, a special correspondent of our *Izvestia* in France. He found out that in the notebook the name of the Frenchman was misspelt, either inadvertently or, more likely, intentionally in case it fell into the Gestapo hangmen's hands. The man's real name is Salvador Charlie, he is a member of the French Communist Party, and lives in Cannes, in the south of France.

This is what Salvador Charlie said when he was told about the notebook.

"While in Sachsenhausen I made friends with some of the Soviet prisoners. Eight of us, four French and four Soviet war prisoners, made up a team for a whole year, we worked together and never parted until the day the camp was evacuated in view of the advancing Soviet forces. For a time I lived in the same barracks with my Soviet friends. They often recited patriotic Russian poetry. I remember one of the Russians very well. His name was Yuri Stolyarov and I believe he came from Leningrad. He used to recite poetry and teach me Russian while I, in turn, taught him French.

"Let me know the number of the barracks and, if possible, send me a copy of the verses. It may help me to remember some things, and then I'll get in touch with you at once. I shall be very happy if I can be of help in establishing the identity of the Soviet comrade who wrote the poetry. I consider it my duty. I shall never forget how much I owe the Soviet people who made such enormous sacrifices to smash Hitler's fascism. As a Communist, I consider it a task of honour to try and find the man I can call my brother after all that we had suffered together in camp."

We regret to say, however, that Salvador Charlie could give us no definite clue either. The poetry "Many Were My Friends" may have been written by Yuri Stolyarov, and then again it may not. We had to go on with our search.

But the poet had been quite right to dedicate the following lines to Salvador Charlie:

*Our prison-camp friendship we'll never forget:  
Like a banner with gunfire charred,  
Like a rising sun, will our friendship yet  
Make humanity's heart beat hard.*

|

Such friendship could not be broken. Devotion to this friendship inspires every word written by Salvador Charlie—patriot, Communist, fighter against fascism. In the name of friendship such as this, people like Salvador Charlie are fighting for peace, and for the sake of this friendship they will make peace triumph. There are millions, many millions of men like him, and that is why friendship is the greatest, strongest and wisest power on earth!

The search goes on. It brings to light more names of people who remained true to their Motherland in word and deed no matter what torture was inflicted on them in the fascist death rooms. We have already learned many names of poets who wrote their patriotic verses amid the horrors of Sachsenhausen. One of these names, perhaps, belongs to the man who wrote most of the poetry in that notebook found among the ruins....

He came back to you, Russia! Your soldier, your loyal son. His words of love, nostalgia, indignation and courage have reached us, kindling in every young heart a feeling of pride in their Motherland for giving birth to such splendid sons. We shall never forget those who laid down their lives for our happiness.

The identity of the hero will be established, it may be soon, perhaps tomorrow. His voice, though, will remain in our hearts, in our memory, for ever, because heroes do not die. They are immortal.

*O. Bitov, K. Devetyarov, A. Yelkin,  
V. Kulemin, A. Pyatunin*

## **TO THE READER**

*The Foreign Languages Publishing House would be glad to have your opinion of this book, its translation and its design and any suggestion you may have for future publications.*

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